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WILLIAM MORRIS

*Fred Hollyer*

THE LIFE OF  
WILLIAM MORRIS

BY

J. W. MACKAIL

*Abridged and edited with Introduction and Notes*

BY

Rao Sahib M. R. RAJAGOPALA AIYANGAR

and

T. N. JAGADISAN

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## INTRODUCTION

A life nobly lived is rare ; equally rare is a well-written story of such a life. William Morris lived a truly noble life, and the many-coloured story of this great man is embalmed for posterity in Prof. J. W. Mackail's classic biography. Thanks to one of the best biographies in English, Morris still lives before us as a passionate and lovable being, who had genius and who used that genius in a dozen ways at once, always knowing what he wished to do, and always doing it with hearty enjoyment.

Morris did many things in life and excelled in everything that he did. But he was greater than all the things he did. About the man himself there is something massively great, and he should be judged not by this masterpiece or that, but by all that he was, wrote and made.

Morris's unique greatness consists in his having been a power for "the humanization of human life". Truly has Professor Mackail said that Morris devoted the whole of his extraordinary powers towards no less an object than the reconstitution of the civilized life of mankind. He laboured all his life to impart to the daily life of every man joy and beauty. To us it may seem that in such an attempt he failed. But Morris knew that this failure was only apparent, not real. Ideas live longer than men, and Morris's ideas have been for ever at work, converting hearts and improving life. It is Morris who speaks when one of his heroes says :— " I pondered all these things and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat and when it comes about, it turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name."

Ruskin realized the intimate relation of art to the daily life of man, and turned in his later years from the criticism

of art to the criticism of society. It was from Ruskin that Morris derived the burden of his own message, that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour. But while Ruskin spoke and wrote, and remained in the main a critic of society, Morris, who was at once a dreamer and a doer, turned from the making of works of art to the effort to remake society. He turned from art to politics because he was an artist. He was a socialist not because he was animated by scientific theories of economic betterment, but because he desired an unanxious life for every man and woman in which they might do all that was best worth doing. A material paradise of comfort and leisure for all would be valuable in his eyes only if in such a world man experienced the joy of labour in his daily activities. Morris became a socialist because he realized that an attempt to end dehumanizing labour meant a fundamental challenge to the entire economic system of his day. The change that he desired was not in the machinery of life, but in the heart of civilized mankind. His great message—delivered through a long period of manifold activity and multiform production—is that “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a people unhappy in its labour to enter into the earthly paradise.”<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that the deepest motive of socialism is ethical. Morris provides a most significant illustration of this truth. For his is the supreme example of that “vital and vivid socialism” which is behind and deeper than political and economic socialism, and which gives a tremendous import to the theory of socialism by its magnificent expression of the very urge of life towards beauty, personality, freedom and fellowship.

<sup>1</sup> G. D. H. Cole: “William Morris” in *Revaluations* (Oxford University Press).

# THE LIFE OF WILLIAM MORRIS

## CHAPTER I

### Walthamstow, Woodford, and Marlborough

1834-1852

William Morris, the eldest son and third child of William Morris and Emma Shelton, was born at Elm House, Clay Hill, Walthamstow, on the 24th of March, 1834. His ancestry was on neither side in any way remarkable, and the family records are scanty in amount and do not go far back.

The Shelton stock was long-lived and of powerful physique. But the Morrises do not seem to have been a very robust family. Both Morris's father and grandfather died comparatively young; and he himself, though he afterwards developed unusual physical strength, was delicate in infancy and early childhood. He had to be kept alive, his mother used to say, by calves' feet jelly and beef tea. Perhaps it was on account of this delicacy that he learned to read unusually young. The knowledge of books came to him almost by instinct. "We never remember his learning regularly to read," his sisters say, "though he may have had a few lessons from our governess:" and he himself could not remember a time when he was unable to read.

The Morrises were originally of Welsh descent, and their native country was the valley of the Upper Severn and its tributaries. Morris's grandfather settled in business in Worcester in the latter part of the eighteenth century and thrived there as a burgess, "a man excellent in every relation of life, and very religious". About 1820 he removed his business to London. There Morris's father entered a firm of brokers in Lombard Street, and when a little over thirty became a partner. The business of the bill-broking firm, and



Mr. Morris's own commercial undertakings, grew and prospered. He became a wealthy man; and in 1840, when his eldest boy was six years old, the family left Elm House, and moved across the Forest to Woodford Hall, a large spacious mansion of Georgian date, standing in about fifty acres of park, on the high road from London to Epping. The park was only separated by a fence from the Forest itself; and the estate included about a hundred acres of farm land, sloping down to the little river Roding.

The park abounded in wild birds and beasts from the neighbouring Forest. It was an ideal home for a boy with healthy outdoor tastes. There Morris, rambling with his brothers on foot or on Shetland ponies through the Forest, formed his intense love of nature and his keen eye for all sorts of woodland life. He never ceased to love Epping Forest, and to uphold the scenery of his native country as beautifully and characteristically English. The dense hornbeam thickets, which even in bright weather have something of solemnity and mystery in their deep shade, and which are hardly found elsewhere in England, reappear again and again in his poetry and his prose romances.

In this healthy country life he rapidly outgrew his early delicacy of constitution. The life indoors was equally happy. "When I was a little chap" was a phrase often in his mouth; and these allusions to childhood always implied the remembrance of perfect contentment. Among the little things that impressed themselves on his childish memory are mentioned "a picture of Abraham and Isaac worked in brown worsted," and Indian cabinets, and "a carved ivory junk with painted and gilded puppets in it in a glass case." "Naïf or gross ghost stories, read long ago in queer little penny garlands with woodcuts," long haunted his imagination; and as he grew bigger, he found and revelled in Lane's "Arabian Nights". He was an eager reader of novels. His eldest sister remembers how they used to read "The Old English Baron"

together in the rabbit warren at Woodford, poring over the enthralling pages till both were wrought up to a state of mind that made them afraid to cross the park to reach home. By the time he was seven years old he had read all the Waverley novels, and many of Marryat's, besides others which were then in fashion. Reading can be acquired without regular teaching, but writing cannot: and he did not learn to write till much after the ordinary age. But his innate skill of hand made it easy of acquirement to him when he once took pains; and his handwriting became in later life one of remarkable beauty. The subsidiary art of spelling was always one in which he was liable to make curious lapses. "I remember," he once said, when speaking of his childhood, "being taught to spell and standing on a chair with my shoes off because I made so many mistakes." In later years several sheets of "The Life and Death of Jason" had to be cancelled and reprinted because of a mistake in the spelling of a perfectly common English word; a word indeed so common that the printer's reader had left it as it was in the manuscript, thinking that Morris's spelling must be an intentional peculiarity.

Among Morris's toys curiously enough was a little suit of armour, in which he rode on his pony in the park. He and his brothers were keen anglers—this taste remained one of his strongest throughout his life—and took the usual boys' pleasure in shooting, not the regular game of seniors, but rabbits and small wild birds. The redwings and fieldfares which they shot on winter holidays they were allowed to roast for supper. It was one of his childish ambitions to shoot woodpigeons with a bow and arrow. Besides the range of the lawn and park the children had little gardens of their own. He writes in later life of "the beautiful hepatica which I used to love so when I was a quite little boy." "To this day," he once said, "when I smell a may-tree I think of going to bed by daylight;" and the strong sweet smell of balm always brought to his mind "very early days in the kitchen-garden at Woodford,

and the large blue plums which grew on the wall beyond the sweet-herb patch." One who shared this outdoor life at Woodford with Morris told me, in a phrase of accurate simplicity, that as a boy he "knew the names of birds." There was, indeed, little that he ever saw of which he did not know the name.

The love of the Middle Ages was born in him. The old Essex churches within reach of Woodford, and their monuments and brasses, were known by Morris at a very early age; and a visit which he made with his father to Canterbury when only eight years old left on his mind an ineffaceable impression of the glory of Gothic architecture. On the same holiday they saw the church of Minster in Thanet. It is characteristic of his extraordinary eye and even more extraordinary memory, that just fifty years later, never having seen the church in the interval, he described it in some detail from that recollection. No landscape, no building, that he had once seen did he ever forget, or ever confuse with another.

When Morris was nine years old, the casual ministrations of his sisters' governess gave place to a more regular education. He was sent to a "preparatory school for young gentlemen" in Walthamstow, kept by the Misses Arundale. This was a couple of miles off, and he rode over to it on his pony. A year or two later the Misses Arundale removed with their school to George Lane, Woodford, within a few hundred yards of Woodford Hall. He remained there first as a day scholar, and afterwards for some time as a boarder, until the death of his father in the autumn of 1847.

Some time before his death Mr. Morris had bought a nomination to Marlborough College for his son. The school had been recently founded "in a healthy and central position," to quote the terms of its prospectus, "and conveniently accessible from all parts of England, being only twelve miles from Swindon, which is to be the great point of junction of the chief

lines of railway in the kingdom." It was at all events in the centre of one of the most beautiful and romantic parts of England, in a neighbourhood full of history, and still fuller of prehistoric records. A childhood on the skirts of Epping Forest was fitly followed by a boyhood on the edge of Saver-nake. It is not easy to over-estimate the influence of these surroundings on the development of a sensitive and romantic nature, or their share in fostering that passionate love of earth and her beauty which remained a controlling and sustaining force throughout his life.

Morris was entered at Marlborough College in February, 1848, being then just under fourteen. He remained there till the Christmas of 1851. The boys were allowed much greater individual freedom than was even then common, or than now exists at any public school. There was no regular system of athletics. Cricket and football were only played by a small number of the boys. In play hours the bulk of them used to ramble about the country. There was no fixed school dress, and no prefect system. Morris lived a rather solitary life; and he left Marlborough with little regret, and retained little affection for it in later years. But his physical and moral strength, both unusually great, saved him from serious bullying, and his school life was not unhappy. The self-sufficingness which always remained one of his most striking characteristics kept him from being either lonely or discontented. He never played either cricket or football. The weekly whole holiday of the summer half was spent by him in long rambles through Saver-nake Forest and over the Downs, sometimes in company with other boys of congenial tastes, but if not, quite happy to be alone.

The school library at Marlborough was well provided with works on archaeology and ecclesiastical architecture. Through these he ranged at will. His power of assimilation was prodigious; and he left Marlborough, he used to say afterwards, a good archaeologist, and knowing most of what there was to be

known about English Gothic. This interest in churches was reinforced by another influence which now came for the first time into his life, that of the Anglo-Catholic movement. The college, though not founded by any theological party, had a distinctly High Church character. The older church music appealed to Morris with a force only less than that of mediæval architecture. The romantic movement, which had originated a generation before, and had received so prodigious an impulse from Scott's novels, was now flooding into the channels of Anglo-Catholicism; and Morris left school a pronounced Anglo-Catholic.

A school fellow at Marlborough describes him as "a thick-set, strong-looking boy, with a high colour and black curly hair, good-natured and kind, but with a fearful temper." According to another, he took little or no part in the school games, but was a keen collector of birds' eggs. The restlessness of his fingers, which must always be handling something, was even then very noticeable. He used to seek relief from it in endless netting. With one end of the net fastened to a desk in the big schoolroom he would work at it for hours together, his fingers moving almost automatically. A school-fellow remembered him as fond of mooning and talking to himself, and considered a little mad by the other boys. On his walk he invented and poured forth endless stories, vaguely described as "about knights and fairies," in which one adventure rose out of another, and the tale flowed on from day to day over a whole term. The captain of his dormitory, who had a fancy for listening to stories and exacted them night after night from the other boys, found him an inexhaustible source. His gusts of temper, as violent as they were brief, are what seem to have most impressed him on his contemporaries.

After Mr. Morris's death, Woodford Hall became too large and difficult an establishment for the family. In the autumn of 1848, during Morris's second half at Marlborough, they removed from it to another house, on the road from Woodford to Tot-

tenham, and within half a mile of their old house on Clay Hill. The earliest extant scrap of Morris's writing is a letter to his sister Emma, dated Feast of All Saints (1st November) in this year, asking for details about the new house. "It is now only 7 weeks to the Holidays, there I go again!" the boy's letter ends, "just like me! always harping on the Holidays I am sure you must think me a great fool to be always thinking about home but I really can't help it I don't think it is my fault for there are such a lot of things I want to do and say and see."

Water House, Walthamstow, the new house to which he returned for the Christmas holidays, and which remained the home of the family till 1856, was one of the same general type as Woodford Hall on a slightly smaller scale. In one of the window seats there he used to spend whole days reading, both before and after he went to Oxford. Behind the house was a broad lawn, and beyond it the feature which gave the house its name, a moat of some forty feet in breadth, surrounding an island planted with a grove of aspens. The moat was stocked with pike and perch; there the boys fished, bathed, and boated in summer, and skated in winter. The island, rough and thickly wooded, and fringed with a growth of hollies, hawthorns, and chestnuts, was a sort of fairy land for all the children, who almost lived on it.

In an unpublished story written fifteen years later, the description of his hero's boyhood has many passages in it which are unmistakably drawn from his own experience. The dreams which mingle with the healthy life of a boy, the first beginnings of thought, of sentiment, of romance, are touched in those passages from knowledge and vivid recollection. "You know," says the boy in the story, "one has fits of not caring for fishing and shooting a bit, and then I get through an enormous lot of reading; and then again one day one goes out and down to the river and looks at the eddies, and then suddenly one thinks of all that again; and then another day when one has one's rod in one's hand one looks up and down the field or sees the road

winding along, and I can't help thinking of tales going on amongst it all, and long so for more and more books." The boy who cannot help thinking of tales going on amongst it all is undoubtedly Morris himself, and Morris as he remained all through his life. Even more strikingly autobiographic perhaps is another touch a little later in the same story: "Even though he half saw it he began to dream about it, as his way was about everything, to make it something different from what it was." This kind of dreaming, the instinct of making everything something different from what it was, was indeed, alike for strength and weakness, of the very essence of his nature.

The church was settled on as Morris's own destined profession. With this career in view, Oxford would naturally succeed to Marlborough, and at Oxford the natural college for a Marlborough boy to go to was Exeter. There was a strong connexion between the West-country school and the West-country College; and several of the Marlborough masters were Exeter men. But Morris was not high up in school, and was more of an expert in silkworms' eggs and old churches than in exact scholarship. It was accordingly arranged that he should leave school that Christmas, and read with a private tutor till he was thought fit to go up for matriculation. The tutor chosen, the Rev. F. B. Guy, afterwards Canon of St. Alban's, was a man of high attainment and character, whose influence over his pupil was great, and with whom in later years Morris kept up a cordial friendship. Morris was with him for nearly a year. Mr. Guy was a High Churchman of the best type, a friend and kindred spirit of Dean Church, and a man of wide sympathies and cultivated taste, with an unusually large knowledge of painting and architecture. When "The Life and Death of Jason" was published, he pleased himself by tracing its germs to the days in which they had read the "Medea" together. Under his tuition Morris developed into a very fair classical scholar.

A fellow-pupil recalled that time with many incidents of Morris's outdoor tastes, his intense love of nature, and his great bodily strength. In playing singlestick, of which he was very fond, his opponent had to be guarded against Morris's impetuous rushes by a table placed between the two combatants. There were frequent visits to Water House, where they chased the swans and dragged the moat for perch, with a net of Morris's own manufacture. Their walks or rides in the Forest were almost daily, and Morris used to go off there by himself when the other pupils went to take a day's amusement in London. The day of the Duke of Wellington's funeral was thus spent by him in a solitary ride to Waltham Abbey. He had refused, with some touch of his later Socialist feeling, to go to London to see the show. One habit he had even then formed which clung to him through life : that of tilting his chair back, getting his legs twisted round it, and suddenly straightening them out to the strain or collapse of the fabric. Many of his own Sussex chairs, not in his own house alone, bear to this day the marks of this trick of his.

At the beginning of June, 1852, Morris went up to Oxford, and passed the matriculation examination at Exeter. This was with the view of going into residence after the Long Vacation. But the College was then so full that his entry had to be deferred till January 1853. He returned to Mr. Guy's meanwhile, and read with him for six months more, going with him for the Long Vacation to Alphington, in Devonshire, and returning to Walthamstow for the remainder of the year. At the examination in the Hall of Exeter there had sat next him another boy who had come up for the same purpose from King Edward's Grammar School, Birmingham, and was destined to be his most intimate and lifelong friend, Edward Burne-Jones.

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## CHAPTER II

### Oxford

1853-1855

The Oxford in which Morris and Burne-Jones began their residence at the end of January, 1853, was still in all its main aspect a mediaeval city, and the name (in Morris's own beautiful words) roused "a vision of grey-roofed houses and a long winding street, and the sound of many bells." Nor in its inner life did Oxford retain less of an old-world air, and of fashions and ideas that had lingered out of an earlier day.

The year which had elapsed since Morris left Marlborough had matured his mind and widened his knowledge to a degree which represents the normal growth of many years in an ordinary mind. "I arrived at Oxford," says Gibbon in the Autobiography, "with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed." Morris's book-knowledge, born of extraordinary swiftness in reading and an amazing memory, was almost as portentous and no doubt as incomplete. "Just as in after years, in the thick of his work," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says, "it was noticeable how he never seemed to be particularly busy, and how he had plenty of leisure for expeditions, for fishing, for amusement, if it amused him; he never seemed to read much, but always knew, and accurately; and he had a great instinct at all times for knowing what would not amuse him, and what not to read."

For such a self-centred nature, already accustomed to take its own views of things, the ordinary college life, the ordinary undergraduate society, had little attraction. The numbers of Exeter were then about one hundred and twenty, and the college buildings were over-full. Notwithstanding its popularity and its increasing numbers, the internal condition of

the college was far from satisfactory. "There was neither teaching nor discipline," is the sweeping verdict of a contemporary of Morris who afterwards rose to high academic distinction. Morris's tutor contented himself with seeing that he attended lectures on the prescribed books for the schools, and noted him in his pupil-book as "a rather rough and unpolished youth, who exhibited no special literary tastes or capacity, but had no difficulty in mastering the usual subjects of examination."

Morris and Burne-Jones made each other's acquaintance within the first two or three days of their first term. At first sight each found in the other a kindred and complementary spirit. Within a week they were inseparable friends. "We went almost daily walks together," Sir Edward writes. "From the first I knew how different he was from all the men I had ever met. He talked with vehemence, and sometimes with violence. I never knew him languid or tired. He was slight in figure in those days; his hair was dark brown and very thick, his nose straight, his eyes hazel-coloured, his mouth exceedingly delicate and beautiful. Before many weeks were past in our first term there were but three or four men in the whole college whom we visited or spoke to. But at Pembroke there was a little Birmingham colony, and with them we consorted when we wanted more company than our own. In a corner of the old quadrangle there, on the ground floor, were the rooms of Faulkner, learned in mathematics and the physical sciences. Dixon, an old school fellow of mine and the only poet in our school, had rooms at the top of the same staircase, and upon the opposite side of the quadrangle lived Fulford, our senior by about two years, a man then full of energy and enthusiasm. But our common room was invariably Faulkner's, where about nine of the evening Morris and I would often stroll down together, and settle once for all how all people should think."

Within, and yet above or apart from the rest of this group, the two Exeter undergraduates lived in undivided intimacy and unremitting intellectual tension. In the Michaelmas term of 1853 they moved into rooms in college. On the first night of one of their terms in college, after Burne-Jones had arrived late from Birmingham, and had supper, "presently Morris came tumbling in," he wrote home next day, "and talked incessantly for the next seven hours or longer." The two read together omnivorously. At first it was chiefly in theology, ecclesiastical history, and ecclesiastical archaeology. Morris early started the habit of reading aloud to Burne-Jones—he could not bear to be read aloud to himself—which continued throughout their lives.

Morris arrived at Oxford already familiar with Tennyson and with the two volumes then published of "Modern Painters". One of Burne-Jones's earliest recollections of his first term was of Morris reading aloud "The Lady of Shalott" in the curious half-chanting voice, with immense stress laid on the rhymes, which always remained his method of reading poetry, whether his own or that of others. Ruskin became for both of them a hero and a prophet, and his position was more than ever secured by the appearance of "The Stones of Venice" in 1853. The famous chapter "Of the Nature of Gothic," long afterwards, lovingly reprinted by Morris as one of the earliest productions of the Kelmscott Press, was a new gospel and a fixed creed. Burne-Jones had come to Oxford already saturated with Shakespeare and Keats, and full of the fascination of the Celtic and Scandinavian mythologies. The Pembroke group were full of enthusiasm for modern and secular literature: Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, in poetry; Carlyle, De Quincey, Thackeray, Dickens, in prose. Thorpe's "Northern Mythology," to which he was introduced by Burne-Jones, opened to Morris a new world, which in later life became, perhaps, his deepest love, that of the great Scandinavian Epic. His other life-long passion, that for the thirteenth century in all

its works and ways, grew not only on the unremitting study of mediaeval architecture, but on a rapid and prodigious assimilation of mediaeval chronicles and romances. But the two books which afterwards stood with him high and apart beyond all others, Chaucer and Malory, were as yet unknown to him ; nor yet had either he or Burne-Jones heard of the name of Rossetti, or of the existence of that Pre-Raphaelite school from which they received, and to which they imparted, so profound an influence.

Before this, however, art was taking a place alongside of literature in Morris's daily life, under the combined influence of his delight in architecture, his natural dexterity of hand, and the companionship of Burne-Jones, whose drawings had already made him a reputation among his schoolfellows at Birmingham. "There was not a boy in the school," one of them writes, "who did not possess at least one of 'Jones's devils.' " Merton Chapel, one of Morris's special haunts, had lately been renovated by Butterfield ; and the beautiful painted roof had been executed by Hungerford Pollen, a former fellow of the college. The application of colour to architecture was then a startling novelty, and young architects were making it their business to learn painting. Morris's study of "The Builder" newspaper, which he took in regularly, alternated with the study of mediaeval design and colouring in the painted manuscripts displayed in the Bodleian. One of these, a splendid Apocalypse of the thirteenth century, became his ideal book. Forty years later he went to Oxford to spend a day in studying it, and looked over it with greater knowledge but unimpaired satisfaction. He was constantly drawing windows, arches, and gables in his books ; and even in his letters of this time, where the pen had paused, there comes a half-unconscious scribble of floriated ornament. Burne-Jones spent whole days in Bagley Wood making minute and elaborate studies of flowers and foliage. Morris's rooms were full of rubbings which he had taken from mediaeval

brasses. But the great pictorial art of Italy and Flanders was as yet unknown to either.

Canon Dixon in his reminiscences of the 'set' as they then called themselves, before this name was replaced by that of the "brotherhood" says: "At first Morris was regarded by the Pembroke men simply as a very pleasant boy (the least of us was senior by a term to him) who was fond of talking, which he did in a husky shout, and fond of going down the river with Faulkner, who was a good boating man. He was very fond of sailing a boat. He was also extremely fond of singlestick, and a good fencer. In no long time, however, the great characters of his nature began to impress us. His fire and impetuosity, great bodily strength, and high temper were soon manifested: and were sometimes astonishing. As, *e.g.*, his habit of beating his own head, dealing himself vigorous blows, to take it out of himself. I think it was he who brought in singlestick. I remember him offering to 'teach the cuts and guards'. But his mental qualities, his intellect, also began to be perceived and acknowledged. I remember Faulkner remarking to me, 'How Morris seems to know things, doesn't he?' And then it struck me that it was so. I observed how decisive he was: how accurate, without any effort or formality: what an extraordinary power of observation lay at the base of many of his casual or incidental remarks, and how many things he knew that were quite out of our way; as, *e.g.*, architecture. One of the first things he ever said to me was to ask me to go with him to look at Merton tower.

"At this time, Morris was an aristocrat, and a high Churchman. His manners and tastes and sympathies were all aristocratic. His countenance was beautiful in feature and expression, particularly in the expression of purity. Occasionally it had a melancholy look. He had a finely cut mouth, the short upper lip adding greatly to the purity of expression. I have a vivid recollection of the splendid beauty of his presence at this time."

Morris's first Long Vacation, that of 1853, was spent in England, largely in going about visiting churches. It included a short visit from Burne-Jones at Walthamstow: it is characteristic of Morris himself and of the terms on which undergraduates live, in a world almost wholly of their own, that Burne-Jones up till then had no idea whether Morris was rich or poor, and whether he lived in a little house or a big one. In the Long Vacation of 1854 he made his first journey abroad, to Belgium and Northern France. This journey was one of profound interest: it introduced him to the painting of Van Eyck and Memling, who remained to him ever after absolute and unapproached masters of painting, and to what he considered the noblest works of human invention, the churches of Amiens, Beauvais, and Chartres. From this Long Vacation also he brought back to Oxford photographs of Albert Durer's engravings. In Paris the Musée Cluny and the galleries of the Louvre enriched his knowledge of mediæval art in its noblest forms. At Rouen his desires were satisfied to the full.

"Less than forty years ago," he writes in one of the frankly and beautifully autobiographic passages of "The Aims of Art," "I first saw the city of Rouen, then still in its outward aspect a piece of the Middle Ages: no words can tell you how its mingled beauty, history, and romance took hold on me; I can only say that, looking back on my past life, I find it was the greatest pleasure I have ever had: and now it is a pleasure which no one can ever have again: It is lost to the world for ever. At that time I was an undergraduate of Oxford. Though not so astounding, so romantic, or at first sight so mediæval as the Norman city, Oxford in those days still kept a great deal of its earlier loveliness: and the memory of its grey streets as they then were has been an abiding influence and pleasure in my life, and would be greater still if I could only forget what they are now—a matter of far more importance than the so-called learning of the place could have been to me in

any case, but which, as it was, no one tried to teach me, and I did not try to learn."

The year which followed was one of even increased moral and imaginative tension, and launched him in the paths which he followed throughout his life. In March he came of age, and came into the uncontrolled disposition of something like £900 a year. This control over great wealth—for such it was for the Oxford circle in which he moved and to his own simple habits—brought with it at once an increased sense of anxious responsibility and a greater boldness in choosing his own course and following it. The Crimean War was in progress, and the awakening effect it had on English public life made the younger generation feel all the excitement of a new era beginning. Socialism in a hundred forms—monastic, or industrial, or aristocratic—was in the air.

That winter Morris and Burne-Jones had moved to new sets of rooms, next to one another, in the Old Buildings of Exeter. "They were tumbly old buildings," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says, "gable-roofed and pebble-dashed. Little dark passages led from the staircase to the sitting rooms, a couple of steps to go down, a pace or two, and then three steps to go up: your face was banged by the door, and then inside the room a couple of steps up to a seat in the window, and a couple of steps down into the bedroom. Here one morning, just after breakfast, he brought me in the first poem he ever made. After that, no week went by without some poem." The story may be continued in Canon Dixon's words.

"One night," he writes, "Crom Price and I went to Exeter, and found him with Burne-Jones. As soon as we entered the room, Burne-Jones exclaimed wildly. 'He's a big poet.' 'Who is?' asked we. 'Why, Topsy'—the name which he had given him." This name, given from his mass of dark curly hair, and generally unkempt appearance, stuck to Morris among the circle of his intimate friends all his life. It was frequently shortened into "Top."

"We sat down," Canon Dixon continues, "and heard Morris read his first poem, the first that he had ever written in his life. It was called 'The Willow and the Red Cliff.' As he read it, I felt that it was something the like of which had never been heard before. It was a thing entirely new: truly striking and beautiful, extremely decisive and powerful in execution. He reached his perfection at once; nothing could have been altered in 'The Willow and the Red Cliff'; and in my judgement, he can scarcely be said to have much exceeded it afterwards in anything that he did. I cannot recollect what took place afterwards, but I expressed my admiration in some way, as we all did; and I remember his remark, 'Well, if this is poetry, it is very easy to write.' From that time onward, for a term or two, he came to my rooms almost every day with a new poem."

This first poem, which produced so profound an impression on its hearers, never went beyond the circle of its earliest audience. Morris destroyed his own manuscript of it in a general massacre which he made, soon after the publication of "The Defence of Guenevere," of the early poems which he did not choose to be included in that volume. "It was a dreadful mistake to destroy them," Canon Dixon says. "But he had no notion whatever of correcting a poem, and very little power to do so." This incapacity or impatience of correction remained characteristic of Morris as a literary artist. The manuscripts of his longer poems show little alteration from the first drafts. When he was dissatisfied with a poem, he wrote it afresh, or wrote another instead of it.

Morris's discovery that he could write prose came hard on the heels of his discovery that he could write poetry, and for some little time prose was the vehicle in which he could express his thoughts and imaginations with greater freedom. The prose romances which he began to write in the summer of 1855, and went on writing for about a year, are as remarkable as his early poetry, and have a strength and beauty which is quite as



rare. But during this year he and Burne-Jones read through Chaucer. He found, in the poet whom he afterwards took for his special master, not merely the wider and sweeter view of life which was needed to correct the harsh or mystical elements of his own mediaevalism, but the conquest of English verse as a medium boundless in its range and perfect in its flexibility. Thenceforth prose was abandoned, and, with the exception of one curious and successful experiment verse remained for thirty years the single form of his production in pure literature.

A widening of interest and outlook towards which the influence of Chaucer and Browning, like two great windows letting in the air and the day, contributed so potently, was coming fast over him in this third year at Oxford—the time in the lives of so many men which is decisive of their whole future. Art and literature were no longer thought of as handmaids to religion, but as ends to be pursued for their own sake, not indeed as a means of gaining livelihood, but as a means of realizing life. More and more it became evident that the taking of Orders, with a direct view to which both Morris and Burne-Jones had gone up to Oxford, was irreconcilable with such a life as they now proposed to themselves. And the idea of common organized effort by the whole group towards a higher life, which for long had been eagerly planned, gradually shifted from the form of a monastic to that of a social brotherhood.

There was a time, early in Morris's undergraduate days, when he had seriously thought of devoting the whole of his fortune to the foundation of a monastery. Such ideas were widely in the air. The community at Littlemore was a centre of influence and a place of pilgrimage, as familiar to all Oxford as the spire of St. Mary's. Similar communities had sprung up in other parts of the country.

The earliest distinct allusion to the scheme which, never realized in its original intention, bore fruit of unexpected growth

in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine and the firm of Morris & Company, comes in a letter from Burne-Jones, dated 1st of May, 1853, to a schoolfellow still in Birmingham, but preparing to go up to Oxford. "I have set my heart on our founding a Brotherhood. Learn 'Sir Galahad' by heart; he is to be the patron of our Order. I have enlisted one in the project up here, heart and soul." A few months later he writes again, "We must enlist you in this Crusade and Holy Warfare against the age;" the crusade then definitely including celibacy and conventual life.

By the end of that year the monastic element began to fade away from the ideas of the Brotherhood. Price and Faulkner brought to Oxford actual knowledge of the inhuman conditions of human life in the great industrial areas; their special enthusiasms were for sanitation, for Factory Acts, for the bare elements of a possible life among the mass of their fellow-citizens. "Things were at their worst," the former writes, "in the forties and fifties. There was no protection for the millhand or miner—no amusements but prize-fighting, dog-fighting, cock-fighting and drinking. When a little boy I saw many prize-fights, bestial scenes: at one a combatant was killed. The country was going to hell apace. At Birmingham school a considerable section of the upper boys were quite awake to the crying evils of the period; social reform was a common topic of conversation. We were nearly all day-boys, and we could not make short cuts to school without passing through slums of shocking squalor and misery, and often coming across incredible scenes of debauchery and brutality. I remember one Saturday night walking five miles from Birmingham into the Black Country, and in the last three miles I counted more than thirty lying dead drunk on the ground, nearly half of them women." Such surroundings impressed indelibly on those who lived in them the ground truth that all true freedom, all living art, all real morality, even among the limited class who are raised out of the common level

by wealth or circumstance, finally depend upon the physical and social conditions of life which exist for the mass of their fellow-creatures. It was not till long afterwards that this view of the matter took full hold of Morris, the countrybred-boy, the easy liver and born aristocrat. But its influence was already sufficient to insure him against the belief that salvation lay in dreams of the past or in isolation from the common life of the world.

### CHAPTER III

#### **The Brotherhood**

1855-1856

In the summer term of 1855, the Brotherhood, as they now began to call themselves, came up to Oxford full of ideas and enthusiasms that could no longer be suppressed, and that demanded some active outlet. The primitive or monastic ideals of the previous year were fading away before a wider knowledge and a more quickened intelligence. The serious employments of mature life lay still seemingly far ahead, and meanwhile the art of literature made its first appeal to them. The newly discovered power and delight of original imaginative writing, and their dissatisfaction with the current tone of thought on all matters deeply affecting human life, alike urged them to some literary enterprise in which imagination and criticism should find harmonious expression. To find some united and organized method of bringing their beliefs and enthusiasms before the world, to join actively in the crusade of which Carlyle, Ruskin, and Tennyson were the accepted leaders, became the first object of their ambition ; and their plans now took definite shape in the resolution to found and conduct a magazine of a really high order. The first suggestion of this magazine was made by Dixon to Morris.

It was taken up eagerly by the others. Co-operation was invited from Cambridge, where Wilfred Heeley had, while keeping up a close friendship with his old school-fellows at Oxford, gathered round him a set of the ablest and most eager of the Trinity men. He was just about to go up for examination for the Indian Civil Service, but was cordial in his support and sympathy. At the end of the term Morris and Burne-Jones went to Cambridge for a week at his invitation, and the plan of the joint venture was farther discussed. As a matter of fact, however, the magazine, while it bore on its title-page the words "Conducted by members of the two Universities," was wholly conducted, and for by far the greater part written, by the Oxford group.

The names, and some of the work, of the Pre-Raphaelite school were by this time becoming known to Morris and his companions, though the artists themselves were still unknown to them. In the summer term at Oxford he and Burne-Jones had seen Mr. Coombe's collection at the Clarendon Press, which included two pictures by Holman Hunt and Rossetti's water-colour of Dante drawing the head of Beatrice. During the Easter vacation, they had seen for the first time pictures by Millais and Madox Brown. A copy of "The Germ" had also about the same time fallen into their hands; and from "Hand and Soul" and "The Blessed Damsel," which they read and re-read for ever, Rossetti rose to a first-rank place in their list of heroes.

On the 19th of July, Morris, Burne-Jones, and Fulford started on a tour in France, crossing from Folkestone and going straight to Abbeville. "We meant it to be really a walking tour," Sir Edward Burne-Jones writes, "for cheapness" sake: not that we walked far, but started with fine ideas of economy necessary for me and conceded by him, who never said whether he had, or had not, money. We went to Abbeville, and there I drew, and to Amiens, and to Beauvais, he falling lame at Amiens, filling the streets with imprecations

on all bootmakers ; but he bought a pair of gay carpet-slippers, and in these he walked from Clermont to Beauvais, about 18 miles. But from this point, as he was footsore, we tried no more walking, but went everywhere by rail or diligence. We took a volume of Keats with us, and no other book : he knew everything about every place we went to. There was a little quarrel as to whether we should go to Paris or not, for though we wanted to go to Chartres, which lay south of it, he would have had us skirt the city, even by two days' journey so as to not see the streets of it. But I wanted to see the pictures in the Louvre, and Fulford wanted to see Paris, and after all there was the Hotel Cluny to pacify him with. He had told me that Notre Dame would be a sight miserable to look at, for the sculptures were half down and lying in careless wrecks under the porches. He was fidgety in Paris, and after three days we hurried away and went straight to Chartres."

A letter from Morris to Price, at the end of three weeks' trip, gives the rest of its history.

"Avranches, Normandy,  
"August 10th, 1855.

"Dearest Crom,

"I haven't quite forgotten you yet, though I have been so long writing, but the fact is, I am quite uncomfortable even now about writing a letter to you, for I don't know what to say ; I suppose you won't be satisfied with the names merely of the places we have been to ; and I scarcely think I can give you anything else. Why couldn't you come, Crom ? O ! the glories of the Churches we have seen ! Crom, we have seen nine Cathedrals, and let me see how many non-Cathedral Churches ; I must count them on my fingers ; there I think I have missed some but I have made out 24 all splendid Churches ; some of them surpassing first-rate English Cathedrals.

“ Behold our itinerary. We started from Chartres quite early (six o’clock) with drizzling rain that almost hid the spires of the Cathedral, how splendid they looked in the midst of it ! We went for about 20 miles by railroad to a place called Maintenon, where we mounted the quaint little conveyance and went off, with the rain still falling a little, through the beautiful country to Dreux, for a distance of about 17 miles. There was plenty to look at by the road. I almost think I like that part of the country better than any other part of the lovely country we have seen in France ; so gloriously the trees are grouped, all manner of trees, but more especially the graceful poplars and aspens, of all kinds ; and the hedgeless fields of grain, and beautiful herbs that they grow for forage whose names I don’t know, the most beautiful fields I ever saw yet, looking as if they belonged to no man, as if they were planted not to be cut down in the end, and to be stored in barns and eaten by the cattle, but that rather they were planted for their beauty only, that they might grow always among the trees, mingled with the flowers, purple thistles, and blue cornflowers, and red poppies, and they all looked as (if) they would grow there for ever, as if they had always grown there, without change of seasons, knowing no other time than the early August. So we went on through this kind of country till we came to Dreux, and the rain had cleared up long before we reached it, and it was a bright sunny day. Well, we had to stop at Dreux about an hour and we saw the church there. Then we left Dreux, and set our faces as though we would go to Evreux ; we were obliged to undergo about half an hour’s ride in the railway before we got there, to my intense indignation. We had only a very short time to stay at Evreux, and even that short time we had to divide (alas ! for our Lower Nature) between eating our dinner and gazing on the gorgeous Cathedral : it is an exceedingly lovely one, though not nearly so large as most of the Cathedrals we saw, the aisles are very rich flamboyant, with a great deal of light canopy work about them. When we left Evreux we found that the country had changed

painter, and Morris an architect. From the art which he then chose for his own the former never swerved or wavered. Morris did not graduate as a professional architect, nor in all his life did he ever build a house. But for him, then and always, the word architecture bore an immense, and one might almost say a transcendental meaning. Connected at a thousand points with all the other specific arts which ministered to it out of a thousand sources, it was itself the tangible expression of all the order, the comeliness, the sweetness, nay, even the mystery and the law, which sustain man's world and make human life what it is. To him the House Beautiful represented the visible form of life itself. Not only as a craftsman and manufacturer, a worker in dyed stuffs and textiles and glass, a pattern designer and decorator, but throughout the whole range of life, he was from first to last the architect.

In the prose romance, written a few months after he took this momentous decision, which contains many fragments of half-conscious autobiography, the hero describes himself in the following significant words: "Ever since I can remember, even when I was quite a child, people have always told me that I had no perseverance, no strength of will; they have always kept on saying to me, directly and indirectly, 'Unstable as water thou shalt not excel;' and they have always been quite wrong in this matter, for of all men I ever heard of, I have the strongest will for good and evil. I could soon find out whether a thing were possible or not to me; then if it were not, I threw it away for ever, never thought of it again, no regret, no longing for that, it was past and over to me; but if it were possible, and I made up my mind to do it, then and there I began it, and in due time finished it, turning neither to the right hand nor the left till it was done. So I did with all things that I set my hand to. Love only, and the wild restless passions that went with it, were too strong for me, and they bent my strong will, so that people think me now a

weak man, with no end to make for in the purposeless wanderings of my life."

Two other great disturbing forces there were which came at long intervals into his life. One was the temporarily overpowering influence of Rossetti, that masterful personality which swayed every one who approached it out of his own orbit. The other was more impersonal and more impalpable, the patient revenge of the modern or scientific spirit, so long fought against, first by his aristocratic, and then by his artistic instincts, when it took hold of him against his will and made him a dogmatic socialist. Apart from these influences and their effects, he continued as he began; the rare instance of a man who, without ever once swerving from truth or duty, knew what he liked, and did what he liked, all his life long.

A few days after returning from France, Morris rejoined Burne-Jones at Birmingham. There also were Fulford and Price, and Heeley had just returned after passing his examination for the Indian Civil Service. Dixon was at home at Liverpool, reading Carlyle's 'French Revolution' and pondering over the difficulties of original composition. Three weeks were spent at Birmingham in furious reading and talking, and in the further incubation of the magazine.

During this visit to Birmingham Burne-Jones took Morris to Cornish's, the bookseller's shop in New Street, where, in accordance with the leisurely eighteenth century practice that still lingered in provincial towns, customers were allowed to drop in and read books from the shelves. There Burne-Jones had passed "hundreds of hours" in this employment; and there lately he had found and begun to read a copy of Southey's edition of Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," a work till then unknown to either of the two, and one which Burne-Jones could not afford to buy. Morris bought it at first sight, and it at once became for both one of their most precious treasures: so precious that even among their intimates there was some shyness over it, till a year later they heard



Rossetti speak of it and the Bible as the two greatest books in the world, and their tongues were unloosed by the sanction of his authority.

The resolution to become an architect, once taken, was put into effect without delay. After the visit to Birmingham, Morris at once began to read hard for his Final Schools and to place himself in communication with Mr. Street with a view to entering his office in Oxford as soon as possible.

At home the change in his plan of life caused indeed disappointment and almost consternation. It had always been taken for granted that he was to enter the Church. The feelings with which Colonel Newcome received Clive's intimation that he was going to be a painter were still those of nearly the whole of the wealthier middle class. Bohemia was a strange foreign kingdom. To be a painter was barely respectable; even to be an architect—a profession in which there was at all events definite office work and possibility of wealth and honour—was to cut oneself away from the staid traditions of respectability. Mrs. Morris at first hardly credited the project announced to her; and it was not until he was safe at Oxford and among his friends again that he ventured to lay his intentions clearly before her. Term was half over when the following letter, written after deep thought and with an unsurpassable delicacy of tenderness, set the matter before her as fixed beyond recall.

“ Ex: Coll: Oxon,

“ Nov. 11th, 1855.

“ My Dear Mother,

“ I am almost afraid you thought me scarcely in earnest when I told you a month or two ago that I did not intend taking Holy Orders: If this is the case I am afraid also that my letter now may vex you; but if you have really made up your mind that I was in earnest I should hope you will be pleased with my resolution. You said then, you remember, and said very truly, that it was an evil thing to be an idle

objectless man ; I am fully determined not to incur this reproach, I was so then, though I did not tell you at the time all I thought of, partly because I had not thought about it enough myself, and partly because I wished to give you time to become reconciled to the idea of my continuing a lay person. I wish now to be an architect, an occupation I have often had hankerings after, even during the time when I intended taking Holy Orders ; the signs of which hankerings you yourself have doubtless often seen. I think I can imagine some of your objections, reasonable ones too, to this profession—I hope I shall be able to relieve them. First I suppose you think that you have as it were thrown away money on my kind of apprenticeship for the Ministry ; let your mind be easy on this score ; for, in the first place, an University education fits a man about as much for being a ship-captain as a Pastor of souls : besides your money has by no means been thrown away, if the love of friends faithful and true, friends first seen and loved here, if this love is something priceless, and not to be bought again anywhere and by any means. If moreover by living here and seeing evil and sin in its foulest and coarsest forms, as one does day by day, I have learned to hate any form of sin, and to wish to fight against it, is not this well too ? Think, I pray you Mother, that all this is for the best : moreover if any fresh burden were to be laid upon you, it would be different, but as I am able to provide myself for my new course of life, the new money to be paid matters nothing. If I were not to follow this occupation I in truth know not what I should follow with any chance of success, or hope of happiness in my work ; in this I am pretty confident I shall succeed, and make I hope a decent architect sooner or later ; and you know too that in any work that one delights in, even the merest drudgery connected with it is delightful too. I shall be master too of a useful trade ; one by which I should hope to earn money, not altogether precariously, if other things fail. I myself have had to overcome many things in making up my mind to this ; it will be rather

grievous to my pride and selfwill to have to do just as I am told for three long years, but good for it too, I think ; rather grievous to my love of idleness and leisure to have to go through all the drudgery of learning a new trade, but for that also good. Perhaps you think that people will laugh at me, and call me purposeless and changeable ; I have no doubt they will, but I in my turn will try to shame them, God being my helper, by steadiness and hard work. Will you tell Henrietta that I can quite sympathise with her disappointment, that I think I understand it, but I hope it will change to something else before long, if she sees me making myself useful ; for that I will by no means give up things I have thought of for the bettering of the world in so far as lies in me.

“ You see I do not hope to be great at all in anything, but perhaps I may reasonably hope to be happy in my work, and sometimes when I am idle and doing nothing, pleasant visions go past me of the things that may be. You may perhaps think this a long silly letter about a simple matter, but it seems to me to be kindest to tell you what I was thinking of somewhat at length, and to try, if ever so unsuccessfully, to make you understand my feelings a little : moreover I remember speaking somewhat roughly to you when we had conversation last on this matter, speaking indeed far off from my heart because of my awkwardness, and I thought I would try to mend this a little now ; have I done so at all ?

“ To come to details on this matter. I purpose asking Mr. Street of Oxford to take me as his pupil : he is a good architect, as things go now, and has a great deal of business, and always goes for an honourable man ; I should learn what I want of him if of anybody, but if I fail there (as I may for I don't know at all if he would take a pupil) I should apply to some London architect, in which case I should have the advantage of living with you if you continue to live near London, and the sooner the better, I think, for I am already

old for this kind of work. Of course I should pay myself the premium and all that.

"My best love to yourself, and Henrietta, and Aunt, and all of them :

"Your most affectionate son

"William.

"P. S. May I ask you to show this letter to no one else but Henrietta."

This term at Oxford was the busiest and happiest of all. The Brotherhood had grown into a close union of minds and hearts, an intimate fellowship in all projects and ideas and enthusiasms.

Morris passed in the Final Schools without difficulty : the negotiations with Street were successful, and it was arranged that he should be formally articulated at the beginning of the year. The set were for the last time all together : Fulford, who had taken his degree a year before and had for a time been teaching in a school at Wimbledon, having returned to Oxford, and Heeley being also there for a considerable part of the term. During this term, too, Morris found a new occupation for his busy fingers. A volume of poems by William Allingham, entitled "Day and Night Songs," had just appeared, containing, a woodcut from a drawing by Rossetti. Both Morris and Burne-Jones pored over it continually. The latter wrote of it as "I think the most beautiful drawing for an illustration I have ever seen", and Morris at once set to work at drawing on wood and cutting the design himself.

Entries in Price's diary show the progress of the magazine meanwhile.

"Nov. 6. After Hall to Faulkner's where I helped Top to concoct a letter to the publishers.

"Nov. 17. Evening to Dixon's. Solemn conclave as to the form title etc. of the coming Mag. Ultimately decided on 72 pages monthly.

"Nov. 22. Ground at a prospectus with Top : in the evening to Pembroke and go on with the prospectus, Fulford joining in and doing lion's share."

The publishers were Messrs. Bell and Daldy ; and the first number of "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, conducted by Members of the two Universities," appeared on the 1st of January, 1856. Twelve monthly numbers duly appeared. At the end of the year the financial drain, Morris's own engrossment in other occupations, and the rapidly divergent interests of the principal contributors, led to its discontinuance. The price of each number was a shilling. But this moderate sum was found too high for the amount of matter by some purchasers, and was thought to have injured the circulation. Each number consists of from 60 to 72 pages in double column, and the contents are classified as Essays, Tales, Poetry, and Notices of Books. The financial responsibility was undertaken wholly by Morris, the only one of the projectors who could easily do so ; though Dixon, out of more limited means, was anxious to help. At first Morris had the general control which, in default of more specific arrangements, follows the control of the purse. But the details of publishing were little to his taste, and as a corrector of proofs he was not very competent. Before the second number appeared the editorship had been formally assigned to Fulford, to whom Morris paid a salary of £100 a year for the performance of that duty. Towards the end of the Christmas Vacation Burne-Jones writes to Price "Topsy has surrendered active powers as editor to Fulford, who is now to be autocratical master of the magazine, with full powers to accept or reject or modify anything or everything submitted to his imperial jurisdiction—it will be a good thing for all of us, and a great relief to Topsy."

The venture received slight, though not unfavourable, notices in the press ; 750 copies of the first number were printed, and a further supply of 250 copies had to be added.

But a large number of these were presentation copies, and the circulation of the succeeding numbers slowly fell off.

After the editorship was placed in Fulford's hands, Morris's own connexion with the management was confined to writing cheques; but he contributed articles, in prose or verse, to every number except those for June and November. "Topsy and I," Fulford writes in September, "are the only ones of the set that write at all regularly. Ted won't write." Generally, however, it may be stated that two-thirds of the whole contents came from members of the Oxford Brotherhood.

There is little in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine which may not be read, even at this distance of time, with much interest; but except three poems of Rossetti, 'The Burden of Nineveh', 'The Blessed Damsel', and 'The Staff and Scrip' Morris's own contributions represent, on the whole, that part of its contents which is of permanent value. "Topsy has got the real grit in him and no mistake. But we shall all go to Heaven. So wrote one of the Brotherhood, in a flash of real insight, when seven numbers of the magazine had appeared. These contributions consist of eight prose tales, five poems, an article on Amiens Cathedral and another on two engravings by Alfred Rethel, and a review of Browning's recently published "Men and Women." The article last named is, I believe, the single instance in which Morris ever voluntarily took the *role* of a reviewer; and together with an article on Rossetti's volume of poems of 1870, which, much against his will, he wrote for the "Academy," it represents the sum of his formal contribution to literary criticism.

In the article on Amiens Cathedral, the intense love and wonderful knowledge Morris had of the Middle Ages, and of those glorious French Gothic churches which were always to him the crown and flower of the whole world's architecture, expressed themselves in what is perhaps even yet the noblest and most loving tribute ever paid to the great Cathedral. It was not written without violent struggles. "I am to have a

grind about Amiens Cathedral this time," he writes from home on the 11th of January, "it is very poor and inadequate, I cannot help it; it has cost me more trouble than anything I have written yet; I ground at it the other night from nine o'clock till half-past four a.m., when the lamp went out, and I had to creep upstairs to bed through the great dark house like a thief." The praise of Amiens has been written by many different pens; but no one has ever written on it with such white heat of enthusiasm and such wealth of detailed insight. Every word of what he writes comes straight from his heart. "I thought," he says, with simple and unashamed modesty, "that even if I could say nothing else about these grand churches, I could at least tell men how I loved them. For I will say here that I think these same churches of North France the grandest, the most beautiful, the kindest and most loving of all the buildings that the earth has ever borne."

Towards the end of the Christmas Vacation of 1855-6, when the first number of the magazine had just been launched on the world, Burne-Jones went for a few days to London; and there an event took place which had momentous consequences in the year which ensued on his own life and that of Morris. He met Rossetti and saw him in his studio. The story shall be given in his own words:—"He (Rossetti) received me very courteously, and asked much about Morris, one or two of whose poems he knew already, and I think that was our principal subject of talk, for he seemed much interested about him. He showed me many designs for pictures; they tossed about everywhere in the room: the floor at one end was covered with them and with books. No books were on shelves, and I remember long afterwards he once said that books were no use to a painter except to prop up models upon in difficult positions and that then they might be very useful. No one seemed to be in attendance upon him. I stayed long and watched him at work, not knowing till many a day afterwards that this was a thing he greatly hated, and when, for shame, I could stay no

longer, I went away, having carefully concealed from him the desire I had to be a painter."

After this vacation, Burne-Jones returned to Oxford, more confirmed than ever in his resolution of becoming a painter at once. During the Lent term he continued to read for the Final Schools; but at Easter he went up to London permanently and left college without taking a degree. Meanwhile Morris had, on the 21st of January, signed his articles with Street and begun work in Street's office in Beaumont Street, living himself in lodgings in St. Giles's, in a house opposite St. John's. Street's senior clerk was then Philip Webb, a man a few years older than Morris. Between them there arose a close and lifelong friendship. When Webb left Street's office in 1859 his place was taken by Norman Shaw. It is hardly too much to say that the work of these three men has, in the course of a generation, revolutionized domestic architecture throughout England.

Morris plunged with his usual ardour and thoroughness into his new profession. His single holiday for several months was on the day when he took his Bachelor's degree. The evenings during term were, as before, spent with the old set, who were still in residence, with the exception of Fulford, now installed in London as editor of the magazine and literary man. In his spare time, besides the poems and stories which he went on pouring forth, Morris was beginning to practise more than one handicraft—clay modelling, carving in wood and stone, and illuminating. A page of his illumination is extant, done in this year. It shows great certainty and mastery in colour, but not the complete grasp of the art which he had acquired a year later; the drawing is uncertain, and the writing not good. His eye for colour was always perfect, and his knowledge with regard to it amazing.

From the day he put on his Bachelor's gown, he ceased the practice, then still enforced on all undergraduates, of shaving the moustache. From that time forward he never



touched a razor and now also he began, partly as a symbol of his profession, partly from mere disinclination to take unnecessary trouble, to wear his hair long, as was then the fashion among artists. His hair remained through life of extraordinary beauty, very thick, fine and strong, with a beautiful curl that made it look like exquisitely wrought metal, and with no parting. It was so strong that he afterwards used to amuse his children by letting them take hold of it and lifting them by it off the ground. His general appearance at this time—the massive head, the slightly knitted brow, the narrow eyeslits and heavy underlids, the delicately beautiful mouth and chin only half veiled by the slight beard—are given with great fidelity in a photograph of about this period which also shows the characteristic hands—broad, fleshy, and rather short, with a look about them of clumsiness and ineffectiveness which was absolutely the reverse of the truth. It was a perpetual amazement to see those hands executing the most delicately minute work with a swiftness and precision that no one else could equal.

After Burne-Jones went to London at Easter, and began painting under the friendly guidance of Rossetti, Morris used to go up almost every week to spend the Sunday with him at his lodgings in Chelsea. He used to arrive on Saturday in time to see pictures at the Academy or elsewhere, and go to a play with Burne-Jones and Rossetti in the evening. After the play—if Rossetti's imperious impatience of bad acting or bad plays allowed them to sit it out—they would go with him to his rooms on the Embankment overlooking Blackfriars Bridge, and sit there till three or four in the morning, talking. All Sunday the talking, varied by reading of the "*Morte d'Arthur*," went on in the Chelsea lodging, Rossetti often looking in upon the other two in the afternoon. On the Monday morning Morris took the first train down to Oxford to be at Street's again when the office opened. During these months Rossetti's influence over him grew stronger and stronger. His doctrine that everybody should be a painter, enforced with all the weight

of his immense personality and an eloquence and plausibility in talk which all who knew him in those years describe as unparalleled in their experience, carried Morris for a time off his feet. He became an ardent pupil, as he was already a keen admirer, of the Pre-Raphaelite school. Rossetti introduced him to Madox Brown and Holman Hunt, and painting rose for a time almost, if not quite, to the first place in his interest.

At the end of this summer, Street removed his headquarters from Oxford to London, and Morris came up with him. In August he and Burne-Jones took rooms together in Upper Gordon Street, Bloomsbury, a neighbourhood convenient to both as being close both to Street's office in Montague Place and to the various drawing schools in the neighbourhood of Fitzroy Square. Some extracts from a letter written from Oxford in July may show the ferment working in his brain.

"I have seen Rossetti twice since I saw the last of you ; spent almost a whole day with him the last time, last Monday that was. Hunt came in the while we were there, a tallish, slim man with a beautiful red beard, somewhat of a turn-up, nose, and deep set dark eyes : a beautiful man . . . Rossetti says I ought to paint, he says I shall be able ; now as he is a very great man, and speaks with authority and not as the scribes, I *must try*. I don't hope much, I must say, yet will try my best—he gave me practical advice on the subject . . . So I am going to try, not giving up the architecture, but trying if it is possible to get six hours a day for drawing besides office work. One won't get much enjoyment out of life at this rate, I know well, but that don't matter : I have no right to ask for it at all events—love and work, these two things only . . . I can't enter into politico-social subjects with any interest, for on the whole I see that things are in a muddle, and I have no power or vocation to set them right in ever so little a degree. My work is the embodiment of dreams in one form or another.

"Yet I shall have enough to do, if I actually master this art of painting: I dare scarcely think failure possible at times, and yet I know in my mind that my chances are slender; I am glad that I am compelled to try anyhow; I was slipping off into a kind of small (very small) Palace of Art . . . . Ned and I are going to live together. I go to London early in August."

"Topsy and I live together," writes Burne-Jones in August, "in the quaintest room in all London, hung with brasses of old knights and drawings of Albert Durer. We know Rossetti now as a daily friend, and we know Browning too, who is the greatest poet alive, and we know Arthur Hughes, and Woolner, and Madox Brown—Madox Brown is a lark! I asked him the other day if I wasn't very old to begin painting, and he said, 'Oh, no! there was a man I knew who began older; by the bye, he cut his throat the other day,' so I ask no more about men who begin late. Topsy will be a painter, he works hard, is prepared to wait twenty years, loves art more and more every day. He has written several poems, exceedingly dramatic—the Brownings, I hear, have spoken very highly of one that was read to them; Rossetti thinks one called 'Rapunzel' is equal to Tennyson: he is now illuminating 'Guendolen' for Georgie . . . . The Mag. is going to smash—let it go! the world is not converted and never will be. It has stupid things in it lately. I shall not write again for it, no more will Topsy—we cannot do more than one thing at a time, and our hours are too valuable to spend so."

## CHAPTER IV

### Red Lion Square : The Oxford Union : The Defence of Guenevere

1857-1859

The formal abandonment of architecture as a profession which took place under Rossetti's influence at the end of 1856 was not felt either by Morris himself or by his friends to be a light matter. To his mother, at all events, who had so short a time before been reluctantly reconciled to his becoming an architect, the change of profession came as a severe shock ; the more so, that with characteristic vehemence, he did not prepare her mind for it, but announced it with a nervous suddenness while he and Burne-Jones were on a visit to Walthamstow. She never quite forgave Burne-Jones for what she naturally thought was mainly his doing. On Morris himself the resolution had an unsettling, and for a time, almost a disastrous effect. For the two years or so during which he worked hard at painting, he was moody and irritable ; he brooded much by himself, and lost for the time a good deal of his old sweetness and affectionateness of manner. Rossetti's conquest of a mind so strong and so self-sufficing was, while it lasted, complete in proportion to the strength which was subdued. He became not only a pupil, but a servant. Once, when Burne-Jones complained that the designs he made in Rossetti's manner seemed better than his own original work, Morris answered with some vehemence, " I have got beyond that ; I want to imitate Gabriel as much as I can." The new gospel was carried down to those of the set who still remained at Oxford, and they were all put to drawing or modelling as if their life depended on it.

When Morris ceased to be all day at Street's office, the lodgings in Upper Gordon Street became inadequate for both him and Burne-Jones to work in. They were also rather ex-

pensive. Burne-Jones was poor ; and Morris, while he was under Rossetti's guidance, had to buy pictures as well as paint them. "Yesterday," runs an entry in Madox Brown's diary for the 24th of August, 1856, "Rossetti brought his ardent admirer Morris of Oxford, who bought my little Hayfield for £40." Just then the rooms at 17, Red Lion Square, which Rossetti and Deverell had occupied in the early days of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, happened to be vacant ; and at Rossetti's suggestion, they removed there. It was a first floor set of three rooms ; the large room in front looked north, and its window had been heightened up to the ceiling to adapt it for use as a studio ; behind it was a bedroom, and behind that another small bedroom or powdering closet. Till the spring of 1859 this was their London residence and working place.

The rooms in Red Lion Square were unfurnished ; and from this trifling circumstance came the beginnings of Morris's work as a decorator and manufacturer. The arts of cabinet-making and upholstery had at this time reached the lowest point to which they have ever sunk. Ugliness and vulgarity reigned in them unchecked. While he lived in furnished rooms it was easy to accept things as they were ; but now, when furniture had actually to be bought, it became at once clear that nothing could be had that was beautiful, or indeed, that was not actively hideous. Nor was it possible even to get so simple a thing as a table or chair, still less any more elaborate piece of furniture, made at the furnishing shops from a better design. It was this state of things which drove Morris and Webb to take up the designing and making of objects of common use on their own account, and which led, a few years later, to the formation of the firm of Morris and Company. For the moment, however, all that was possible was that Morris should make rough drawings of the things he most wanted, and then get a carpenter in the neighbourhood to construct them from those drawings in plain deal. Thus the rooms in Red Lion Square were gradually provided with "intensely

mediaeval furniture," as Rossetti described it, "tables and chairs like incubi and succubi." First came a large round table "as firm, and as heavy, as a rock"; then some large chairs, equally firm, and not lightly to be moved, "such as Barbarossa might have sat in." Afterwards a large settle was designed, with a long seat below, and above, three cupboards with great swing doors. Rossetti made designs for oil paintings to be executed on the panels of the cupboard doors and the sides of the settle. On the backs of two of the large heavy chairs he also painted subjects from Morris's own poems. The theory that furniture should mainly exist to provide spaces for pictorial decoration was carried in these chairs to an extreme limit. But the next piece of furniture required for the rooms was a wardrobe: and this, covered by Burne-Jones in the spring of 1857 with paintings from "The Prioress's Tale" in Chaucer, remained to the last the principal ornament of Morris's drawing-room in London, and is familiar to all his later as well as his older friends.

Morris himself worked hard at drawing and painting all that spring. His wonderful faculty of pattern designing had already come to him, and with it a unique sense for justness in colour, fed on admiring study of the best early mediaeval work especially in illumination. "In all illumination and work of that kind," Rossetti writes just before Christmas, 1856, "he is quite unrivalled by anything modern that I know." In the drawing and modelling of animate forms he never could become proficient. The human figure was too much for him, and even with birds or animals in his designs he felt difficulty. So it remained afterwards. The animals in his wall-papers were, as a rule, drawn by Webb, and the figures in his tapestries by Burne-Jones; and many years later, when designing the borders for the Kelmscott Chaucer, he expressed his regret at not being able to fill them with Chaucer's favourite birds. Such figures as he designed, of which there are a number both in illuminations and in stained glass are obviously, faulty in drawing.

A holiday during this Red Lion Square time was nearly always spent at the Zoological Gardens. For the greater birds Morris had always a special affection. He would imitate an eagle with considerable skill and humour, climbing on to a chair and, after a sullen pause, coming down with a soft heavy flop ; and for some time an owl was one of the tenants of Red Lion Square, in spite of a standing feud between it and Rossetti. The evenings were pretty often spent at the theatre, seeing Robson at the Olympic, or Kean's Shakespearean pageant at the Princess's. Among all this series of spectacular plays, "Richard the Second" (March to July, 1857) was Morris's special favourite. For the beautiful fluency and copiousness of the language in this play he had an immense admiration. When all the rest of the day's work or amusement was over, there were gatherings at Rossetti's rooms in Chatham Place, beginning about midnight and often lasting far into the morning.

How long Rossetti's daily influence might have kept him labouring at what he could not do, when there was work all round that he could do, on the whole, better than any man living, it is needless to inquire. But the first piece of work which took him away from life in a painter's studio, and began his career as a decorator, was of Rossetti's own initiation.

In the early part of the Long Vacation of 1857, Rossetti went down to Oxford to see his friend Benjamin Woodward, the architect. Morris, always delighted to take a day at Oxford, went with him. Besides his principal work at the museum, Woodward was engaged in building a debating hall for the Union Society. That hall, now the principal library, was just roofed in. In form, the hall was a long building with apsidal ends. A narrow gallery fitted with book-shelves ran completely round it, and above the shelves was a broad belt of wall divided into ten bays, pierced by twenty six-foil circular windows, and surmounted by an open timber roof. Rossetti was at once fired with the idea of painting the space thus given.

In his notions of the application of painting to architectural surfaces, Woodward, an ardent admirer and skilled imitator of the Venetian builders, cordially concurred ; and it was at once settled that the ten bays and the whole of the ceiling should be covered with painting in tempera. The Building Committee of the Union, who had a general discretion as regards the work to be done during the Long Vacation, were induced to authorize the work without waiting to refer the matter to a general meeting of the Society. It was arranged that the paintings should forthwith be designed and carried out under Rossetti's superintendence. He himself, and other artists whom he should invite to join him, were to be the executors. The Union was to defray the expense of scaffolding and materials, and the travelling and lodging expenses of the artists, who, beyond this, were to give their services for nothing. No sooner was this settled, than Rossetti went straight back to London and issued his orders.: Burne-Jones and Morris were to lay aside all other work and start on the new scheme at once. He had it all planned in his mind. The ten paintings on the walls were to be a series of scenes from the "Morte d'Arthur," and the roof above them was to be covered with a floriated design. For the pictures, ten men had to be found, each of whom should execute one bay, and the work, in the first enthusiasm, was estimated as a matter of six weeks or so. Arthur Hughes, Spencer Stanhope, Val Prinsep, and Hungerford Pollen, were drawn into the scheme and agreed to take a picture each ; Madox Brown was also asked to execute one, but declined. Rossetti undertook to do two, or if possible three, himself, and Morris and Burne-Jones were each to do one under his eye and with his guidance : eight or nine of the ten bays were thus accounted for, and the remainder of the space was for the moment left to chance.

The story of these paintings, of which the mouldering and undecipherable remains still glimmer like faded ghosts on the walls of the Union Library, is one of work hastily undertaken ;



executed under impossible conditions, and finally abandoned after time and labour had been spent on it quite disproportionate to the original design. A scheme of mural decoration which was practically new in England, and which involved the most careful preparation and the most complete forethought, was rushed, and many of the most obvious precautions neglected. None of the painters engaged in it had then any practical knowledge of the art of mural painting, nor do they seem to have thought that any kind of colour could not be applied to any kind of surface. The walls were newly built, and the mortar still damp. No ground whatever was laid over the brickwork except a coat of whitewash: and on this the colour was to be laid with a small brush, like water-colour on paper.

Morris set to work with his usual energy. Before either of the others had made a design, he was in Oxford and had begun his painting. Presently Rossetti and Burne-Jones joined him there, and for the rest of the vacation they lived together in lodgings in the High Street in a house now pulled down to make room for the new Schools. The other four painters came later, and the work, at first carried on with happy diligence through long hours day after day, became more intermittent as winter advanced, and trailed on into the following spring. Morris's was the first picture finished as it had been the first begun. The subject was one for which he felt a singular and almost a morbid attraction, that of the unsuccessful man and despised lover. It was entitled "How Sir Palomydes loved La Belle Iseult with exceeding great love out of measure, and how she loved not him again but rather Sir Tristram." All of it that now traceably survives is the faded gleam of sunflowers with which part of the foreground was covered. But no sooner had Morris finished his picture than he set to work with fresh animation and with triumphant success on the decoration of the roof. The design for this was made in a single day, and surprised all the rest of the painters

by its singular beauty and fitness. All the rest of the autumn he was working on the roof high over the heads of the others, carrying out the greater part of the decoration with his own hands. But Faulkner, now Fellow and Mathematical Tutor of University, came pretty regularly in the afternoons to help. "Charley comes out tremendously strong on the roof with all kinds of quaint beasts and birds," Burne-Jones wrote home in October. After term began, Price and others were impressed to assist as they came up. "I worked with him," Canon Dixon tells me, "on his picture of the famous sunflowers for several days, and was pleased to hear him say that it was improved." The day's work began at eight o'clock and went on as long as daylight lasted. "If we needed models," Sir Edward Burne-Jones writes, "we sat to each other, and Morris had a head always fit for Lancelot or Tristram. For the purposes of our drawing we often needed armour, and of a date and design so remote that no examples existed for our use. Therefore Morris, whose knowledge of all these things seemed to have been born in him, and who never at any time needed books of reference for anything, set to work to make designs for an ancient kind of helmet called a basinet, and for a great surcoat of ringed mail with a hood of mail and the skirt coming below the knees. These were made for him by a stout little smith who had a forge near the Castle. Morris's visits to the forge were daily, but what scenes happened there we shall never know; the encounters between these two workmen were always stubborn and angry as far as I could see. One afternoon when I was working high up at my picture, I heard a strange bellowing in the building, and turning round to find the cause, saw an unwonted sight. The basinet was being tried on, but the visor, for some reason, would not lift, and I saw Morris embedded in iron, dancing with rage and roaring inside. The mail coat came in due time, and was so satisfactory to its designer that the first day it came he chose to dine in it. It became him well; he looked very splendid. When it lay in coils on the ground, one could lift it with great difficulty, but

once put on the body its weight was so evenly ordered that it was less uncomfortable than any top coat I ever wore. I have the basinet still, and the sword that was made by the same smith."

The decoration of the roof was finished early in November.

The Bohemian life in London had by this time raised Morris's unconventionality, which had always been extreme, to a still more excessive height. To wear long hair, and a soft felt hat, and to smoke a pipe in season and out of season, was still, as in the earlier days of Clive Newcome, the mark of an artist. But Morris exceeded even the customary licence of Gandish's. "Morris went to Jones's on Sunday night," runs a note in Miss Price's diary, "while they were here; and his hair was so long and he looked so wild that the servant who opened the door would not let him in, thinking he was a burglar." He forswore dress clothes, and there is a ludicrous story of his ineffectual attempt to get into Hughes's evening trousers when he was going to dine at high table in Christ Church. To go into society was torture to him, and he never took pains to conceal it. One of the tribulations of these months was the task, equally hard in either case, of evading or accepting the invitations of Dr. Henry Acland, whose intimacy with Ruskin and appreciation of the Pre-Raphaelite school led him to offer constant hospitality to the young painters. Once, when they were to dine with Dr. Acland, Morris invented an illness and sent his apologies by Burne-Jones. Unfortunately, Burne-Jones arrived with this message when there still wanted a few minutes to dinner-time. Acland, who was all kindness, instantly, to Burne-Jones's infinite dismay, put on his hat and went round to see the sick man in his lodgings: he was found, apparently in the best of health and spirits, sitting at dinner with Faulkner and playing cribbage over the meal. He had to confess recovery, and be led off to dinner. Another story of the same period is equally characteristic. At dinner one evening in George Street, Prinsep said something, whether intentionally or not, which offended Morris. Every

one expected an outburst of fury. But by a prodigious effort of self-control Morris swallowed his anger, and only bit his fork—one of the common four-pronged fiddle-pattern kind—which was crushed and twisted about almost beyond recognition. During these months, too, he was feeling his way in other arts and handicrafts : carving a block of freestone into a capital of foliage and birds, done with great spirit and life, Mr. Arthur Hughes says ; drawing and colouring designs for stained-glass windows ; and modelling from the life in clay. Price sat to him for a clay head which he was modelling ; it was never finished, because whenever Morris grew impatient he flew at it and smashed it up. In carving the stone block he struck a splinter into his own eye and his language to Dr. Acland, who was called in to look after the injury, was even for him unequalled in its force and copiousness. About the same time he was making his first experiments in reviving the decayed art of embroidery. He had a frame made from an old pattern, and worsteds specially dyed for him by an old French dyer. He worked at this till he had mastered the principles of laying and radiating the stitches so as to cover the ground closely and smoothly. A piece of work he began then with a bird and tree pattern embroidered on it is still in existence, In these months also were written a number of the finest of the poems published, early in 1858, in Morris's first volume, "The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems."

This volume is so well known that any detailed account or criticism of its contents would be superfluous. It is one of those books which, without ever reaching a wide circulation or a large popularity, have acted with great intensity on a small circle of minds, and, to those on whom they struck fully home, given a new colour to the art of poetry and the whole imaginative aspect of things. On its appearance, it met with no acclamations ; it did not even gain the distinction of abuse : it simply went unnoticed.

But if the value of poetry is to be measured (to use the phrase of the logicians) in intention, few volumes have a more marked place in modern literature. Mr. Swinburne's just and tempered language as to the reception of "The Defence of Guenevere" hardly needs to be supplemented. "Here and there," he wrote of it when Morris had leaped into fame and even popularity with the appearance of "Jason," "it met with eager recognition and earnest applause; nowhere, if I err not, with just praise or blame worth heeding. It seems to have been now lauded and now decried as the result and expression of a school rather than a man, of a theory or tradition rather than a poet or student. Those who so judged were blind guides. Such things as were in this book are taught and learnt in no school but that of instinct. Upon no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded. It needed no exceptional acuteness of ear or eye to see or hear that this poet held of none, stole from none, clung to none, as tenant, or as beggar, or as thief. Not yet a master, he was assuredly no longer a pupil."

"The Defence of Guenevere" was published in March. About the same time Burne-Jones, left much alone in Red Lion Square since the beginning of the year, had fallen rather dangerously ill, and was carried off by Mrs. Prinsep, the kind friend of all artists, to Little Holland House, to be taken care of and nursed back to health. He stayed there during a great part of the year. There was, therefore, no permanent companion for Morris in Red Lion Square; and though it remained his London lodging, much the greater part of the year was spent by him at Oxford. There he went on painting hard, but with continued dissatisfaction.

There was, however, a further and a stronger reason for his prolonged stay at Oxford. Towards the end of the Long Vacation of 1857, Rossetti and Burne-Jones, who had gone, after a day's work at the Union, to the little Oxford theatre,

found sitting just behind them two girls, daughters of Mr. Robert Burden, of Holywell Street. The elder attracted their attention at once by her remarkable beauty, of a type not common in England, and specially admired by Rossetti. They made her acquaintance ; and after some little negotiation she was persuaded to sit to him and his friends, and continued to do so while the work at the Union was going on. With Morris the attraction went deeper, and soon after his volume of poems appeared they became engaged.

On Tuesday the 26th of April, 1859, William Morris and Jane Burden were married in the little ancient parish church of St. Michael's in Oxford ; he was then just five and twenty. Dixon, who had by this time taken Orders and was curate of St. Mary's, Lambeth, came down to perform the ceremony ; Faulkner was the best man ; and Burne-Jones and a few more of the old Oxford set were there. It was the last scene in the Oxford life of the Brotherhood.

## CHAPTER V

### **Red House : Formation of the Firm : The Fall of Troy** 1859-1865

After a six weeks' tour to Paris, Belgium, and the Rhine, as far as Basle, Mr. and Mrs. Morris returned to London, to furnished rooms at 41, Great Ormond Street, where they lived while their own house was being built. The establishment at Red Lion Square was finally broken up, Burne-Jones going into lodgings of his own in Charlotte Street. Webb had just left Street's office to set up as an architect on his own account, and the building of the new house was placed in his hands. The house was to be a proving piece. In it the theories of its owner and its architect on domestic building and decoration were to be worked out in practice : and the scheme and details

were the joint invention of the two. The notion of building a house after his own fancy was one which had already been in Morris's mind for a considerable time. He wanted it not merely as a place to live in, but as a fixed centre and background for his artistic work. He hated designing in the air, without relation to a definite material and a particular purpose. While his whole work as a decorative manufacturer may be not untruly said to have sprung directly out of the building and furnishing of this house, it would be almost equally true to say that the house, first in idea and then in fact, sprung out of his devoting himself to the practice of decorative art and requiring, as one might say, a canvas to work upon. When his approaching marriage made a home of some sort, other than London or Oxford Lodgings, a necessity, the building of the house followed as a matter of course.

It was to be in the country, and by preference not far from London, though as to this he was really indifferent. The great network of suburban railways had then hardly begun to exist, and the spot finally fixed upon at Upton though little more than ten miles from London by road, was about three miles from the nearest station, that at Abbey Wood on the North Kent Line. The district, even when less built over than it is now, was not one of any remarkable charm: it had something of the sadness of that common English lowland country of which Morris was so fond; but was fertile, well wooded and watered, and interspersed with pleasant orchards and coppices.

The reaction from early Victorian stucco had just begun to set in, but had not yet begun to produce any visible effect over the country. Nowadays, when the red brick of the common modern country house is to be seen on every roadside, this, the first house that Webb built, might be passed without any remark by a casual traveller. But Mr. Norman Shaw was then a clerk in Street's Office; stucco and slate still reigned supreme in all districts where stone was not the native building

material ; and the name of Red House given to the new building was sufficient to describe it without ambiguity to all the neighbourhood. Its planning was as original as its material. The type of house which Morris was fond of describing as a square box with a lid was completely abandoned : it was planned as an L-shaped building, two-storied, with a high-pitched roof of red tile. The beautiful oak staircase filled a bold projection in the angle, and corridors ran from it along both the inner walls, so that the rooms on both limbs of the house faced outward on to the garden. The two other sides of this half-quadrangle were masked by rose trellises, inclosing a square inner court, in the middle of which rose the most striking architectural feature of the building, a well-house of brickwork and oak timber, with a steep conical tiled roof. Externally the house was plain almost to severity, and depended for its effect on its solidity and fine proportion. The decorative features it possessed were constructional, not of the nature of applied ornament: the frankly emphasized relieving arches over the windows, the deep cornice moulding, the louvre in the high open roof over the staircase, and the two spacious recessed porches. Inside its most remarkable feature was the large drawing-room, which filled the external angle of the L on the upper floor. It looked by its main end window northwards towards the road and the open country ; and a projecting oriel in the western side overlooked the long bowling green, which ran, encircled with apple trees, close under the length of that wing. The decoration of this room, and of the staircase by which it was reached, was to be the work of several years for Morris and his friends : and he boldly announced that he meant to make it the most beautiful room in England. But through the whole house, inside and out, the same ideal standard was, so far as possible, to be kept up.

It was at this point that the problem of decoration began. The bricklaying and carpentering could be executed directly from the architect's designs. But when the shell of the house



was completed, and stood clean and bare among its apple trees, everything, or nearly everything, that was to furnish or decorate it had to be likewise designed and made. Only in a few isolated cases—such as Persian carpets, and blue china or delft for vessels of household use—was there anything then to be bought ready-made that Morris could be content with in his own house. Not a chair, or table, or bed; not a cloth or paper hanging for the walls; nor tiles to line fireplaces or passages; nor a curtain or a candlestick; nor a jug to hold wine or a glass to drink it out of, but had to be reinvented, one might almost say, to escape the flat ugliness of the current article. The great painted settle from Red Lion Square was taken and set up in the drawing-room, the top of it being railed in so as to form a small music gallery. Much of the furniture was specially designed by Webb and executed under his eye: the great oak dining-table, other tables, chairs, cupboards, massive copper candlesticks, fire-dogs, and table glass of extreme beauty. The plastered walls and ceilings were treated with simple designs in tempera, and for the hall and main living rooms a richer and more elaborate scheme of decoration was designed and gradually began to be executed. The garden was planned with the same care and originality as the house; in both alike the study of older models never sank into mere antiquarianism or imitation of obsolete forms. Morris's knowledge of architecture was so entirely a part of himself that he never seemed to think about it as anything peculiar. But in his knowledge of gardening he did, and did with reason, pride himself. It is very doubtful whether he was ever seen with a spade in his hands; in later years at Kelmscott his manual work in the garden was almost limited to clipping his yew hedges. But of flowers and vegetables and fruit trees he knew all the ways and capabilities. Red House garden, with its long grass walks, its midsummer lilies and autumn sunflowers, its wattled rose-trellises inclosing richly-flowered square garden plots, was then as unique as the house it surround-

ed. The building had been planned with such care that hardly a tree in the orchard had to be cut down ; apples fell in at the windows as they stood on hot open autumn nights.

Red House was sufficiently advanced for occupation towards the end of the summer of 1860. It was meant to be a permanent home. Circumstances then unforeseen obliged him to leave it after only five years, while it was still growing in beauty. But the five years spent there were probably the happiest and not the least fruitful of his life.

The difficulty of furnishing the house when built was one that demanded some more practical solution than that of getting each article singly and laboriously manufactured, even had it been easier than it was to find manufacturers who would accept such orders. Instances like that of Messrs. Powell, the great glass-makers in Whitefriars, who were receptive of new ideas and really eager to produce beautiful objects, were of the rarest occurrence ; the ordinary manufacturer, like the ordinary purchaser, looked at any beautiful design with a feeling compounded of fear, apathy, and contempt. Meanwhile Morris's apprenticeship to the arts of building and painting, with their subsidiary industries, had fully kindled his inborn instinct for handicraft : from the mood of idleness into which he had for a short time fallen he plunged back into the mood of energy, and his brain and fingers tingled to be at work. The eagerness of the maker, the joy of craftsmanship, had come to him, and came to stay. So it was that in half-unconscious adaptation to the conditions of modern life, the monastery of his Oxford dreams rose into being as a workshop, and the Brotherhood became a firm registered under the Companies Acts.

The first notion of the firm of Morris & Company, the name and wares of which have since become so widely spread, sprang up among the friends in talk, and cannot be assigned to any single author. It was in a large measure due to Madox Brown ; but perhaps even more to Rossetti, who, poet and idealist as he was, had business qualities of a high order, and the eye of the

trained financier for anything that had money in it. To Morris himself, who had not yet been forced by business experience into being a business man, the firm probably meant little more than a definite agreement for co-operation and common work among friends who were also artists. The directions in which it turned its energies were to be determined, primarily, by the things which he wanted to make or to have made for his own private use, and then by the requirements, towards the purposes of their own professional work, of the rest of his associates. Of these associates Burne-Jones and Madox Brown were already regularly employed in making designs for stained glass, mainly, of course, for church windows. Webb was not only an architect, but a designer of the smaller work which is usually separate from that of the architect, or only taken up by him as by-play; a master of proportion and ornament, whether applied to the larger masses of architecture or to such things as tables and chairs and lamps. Faulkner, deeply bitten with the enthusiasms of his friends, and unable to bear the loneliness of Oxford now that all the rest were gone, had resigned the mathematical tutorship which he held together with his Fellowship at University, and had come to London to learn the business of a civil engineer. As a man with a head for figures, who could keep the accounts of the business, he was a valuable associate; and though he had no gift of design, he contributed a good deal of work as a craftsman. He helped in executing mural decorations; he painted pattern-tiles, and figure-tiles on which the design had been drawn by a more skilled hand; and he even, in March, 1862, successfully cut a wood-block, on which Rossetti had drawn the well-known illustration for his sister's poem of "Goblin Market."

Church decoration was at first the main employment of the new firm. It was just at that time rising into the rank of an important industry. In the building of new, and the redecoration of old churches, there was a demand for glass, tiles, altar-cloths, and every sort of furnishing, which was but feebly

met by the established producers of upholsterer's Gothic. Through the architects Street and Bodley the newly-formed company had at once work of this sort put in their hands, their first commissions, and the principal pieces of their first year's business, were for the decoration of two new churches which were being built by Bodley, those of St. Martin's, Scarborough, and St. Michael's, Brighton. In the latter the chancel-roof was painted by Morris, Webb, and Faulkner, with their own hands : and the windows were executed from designs by Madox Brown and Burne-Jones.

With the formation, in April, 1861, of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., the old Oxford Brotherhood, with its ideas of common life and united action, finally fell asunder. The outer fringe of that company had already passed into circles and interests of their own. Fulford and Dixon had taken Orders ; Macdonald had gone to America. Price, the only other member of the inner circle, had, at the end of 1860, accepted an appointment in Russia, which took him away from England for three years. Morris, Burne-Jones, and Faulkner were actually in a minority on the new association. The Round Table was dissolved indeed.

Seldom has a business been begun on a smaller capital. Each of the members held one share, and on the 11th of April the finance of the company began with a call of £1 per share. On this, and on an unsecured loan of £100 from Mrs. Morris of Leyton, the first year's trading was done. Premises were taken from Lady Day, 1861, at 8, Red Lion Square, a few doors off Morris's and Burne-Jones's old rooms. The ground floor of the house was occupied by a working jeweller : the firm rented the first floor for an office and show room, and the third floor, with part of the basement, for workshops. In the basement a small kiln was built, for firing glass and tiles. As the work grew on their hands, about a dozen men and boys came to be regularly employed on the premises. The boys were got from a Boys' Home in the Euston Road ; the men chiefly from

Camden Town. The foreman, Mr. George Campfield, was a glass-painter who had come under Morris's notice as a pupil at the evening classes of the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street. He is still in the employment of the firm at Merton Abbey. There were regular weekly meetings of the firm on Wednesday evenings, but otherwise Morris and Faulkner were the only two partners who partook in the active management of the business.

The weak point of the whole business was the want of anything like real capital. For each piece of work executed a price could be charged, such as customers were found willing to pay, which covered the cost of its production. But the output was slow, the sales uncertain, and there was no reserve to draw upon ; the conduct of the work was therefore necessarily from hand to mouth, and had to be guided by the exigencies of the moment. Any extension of the business, however ultimately remunerative, threw its finances off their very unstable equilibrium. In the course of the first three or four years Morris had, bit by bit, advanced all he could to the concern, and was not yet beginning to receive any appreciable returns. This was an anxious time for him, and perhaps the only time in his life when he was really in trouble about money. Once or twice in these early years the accounts showed an actual loss on the year's working. Fortunately his resources did prove sufficient to tide over this period, and thereafter a capital began to form itself out of accumulated profits. But these were in strict law divisible among the partners equally ; and the initial fault of the enterprise very nearly led to disastrous results upon the dissolution of the partnership. Morris had yet to learn by unpleasant experiences of more kinds than one the principles on which sound business can be conducted. That he did so, and that while he was doing so he carried the business almost unaided through so crucial a period, was due to a persistency, a sagacity, an unweariable industry, for which he has seldom received adequate credit.

Life at Red House in those years was indeed realized felicity for the group of friends to a greater degree than often falls to the lot of schemes deliberately planned for happiness. The garden, skilfully laid out amid the old orchard, had developed its full beauty, and the adornment of the house kept growing into greater and greater elaboration.

Here, as soon as the Morris moved into it at the close of the wet summer of 1860, open house was kept for all their friends. Burne-Jones and his wife—he had been married that June—spent their Sundays there almost regularly. Rossetti, Faulkner and his two sisters, Webb, Swinburne, Madox Brown, Arthur Hughes were also frequent and welcome visitors. Mr. Hughes remembers once riding down from London, and Morris riding back a good part of the way with him next day. In summer bowls were always played a great deal ; and drives were taken about the country in a carriage which Morris had specially built for himself, with leather curtains, and a decided flavour of the Middle Ages about it. The winter festivities were even merrier : it was a home of young people full of the high spirits of youth. “ O the joy of those Saturdays to Mondays at Red House ! ” writes one of the frequent guests of those days, “ the getting out at Abbey Wood Station and smelling the sweet air, and then the scrambling, swinging drive of three miles or so to the house ; and the beautiful roomy place where we seemed to be coming home just as much as when we returned to our own rooms. No protestations—only certainty of contentment in each other’s society. We laughed because we were happy.” “ It was the most beautiful sight in the world,” says another of his old friends of the Red House days, “ to see Morris coming up from the cellar before dinner, beaming with joy, with his hands full of bottles of wine and others tucked under his arms.”

Here were born his two children. On the 18th of January, 1861, he writes to Madox Brown, with a fine affectation of unconcern.

" My dear Brown,

" Kid having appeared, Mrs. Brown kindly says she will stay till Monday, when you are to come to fetch her, please. I send a list of trains in evening to Abbey Wood met by bus. Janey and Kid (girl) are both well."

On the 25th of March in the following year a second girl was born, and named Mary, after the Lady of the day.

The life of those years at Red House was for Morris one of almost complete contentment.

With a growing family and a constant hospitality, the expense of living at Red House and continuing its decoration on the same lavish scale became greater year by year. At the same time the copper mine, from which the greater part of his permanent income was still derived, began to yield rapidly diminishing returns. The business in Red Lion Square had not ceased to be a drain on these diminishing revenues, and was not till some years later a trustworthy source of income. Its prospects were indeed improving. The movement towards restoring to Anglican churches and church services some part of their ancient beauty and symbolism was taking definite shape all over the country, and was beginning to be known by the name of Ritualism. Commissions for church decoration in the form of wall-painting, embroideries, or hangings, altar-cloths, stained-glass windows, and floor-tiles, came in more and more steadily. And the movement was just beginning to spread from ecclesiastical into secular life, and become what was afterwards called Aestheticism.

But this very increase in the firm's work had already made the premises in Red Lion Square insufficient for their purpose while, as Morris had to give more of his time to its management, the expense and fatigue of managing it from Upton both increased likewise. Early in 1864, the question of removing the works to Upton and setting a manufactory there began to be seriously discussed. A plan was suggested and elaborat-

ed for the addition of another wing to Red House so as to make room for Burne-Jones to live there also ; and ground for workshops was to be had on moderate terms close by. The scheme was very near being carried out. But before the end of the year, a series of misfortunes happened which altered the whole case for both.

In September, the Morrises had gone to seaside lodgings at Littlehampton with the Burne-Joneses and Faulkners. Scarlet fever broke out there. Miss Faulkner and Burne-Jones's little boy took back the infection with them to London. With them it ran its normal course ; but a little later it developed in Mrs. Burne-Jones also, and she had a long and dangerous illness. Just then Morris caught a chill on a wet, cold journey between London and Upton, which brought on a severe attack of rheumatic fever. For some time he was wholly crippled. When he recovered, his health still was such as to make a daily journey to London quite out of the question. Burne-Jones, himself in very delicate health, in deep anxiety about his wife, and dependent for the means of actual livelihood on his daily work, felt that he could not cast himself loose from the resources and conveniences of London. The plan of a joint establishment had to be dropped. And when health began to be a serious consideration, Red House had certain disadvantages. Planned and begun in the extraordinarily hot dry summer of 1859, it had been made to face north and was very cold in winter ; it was not well situated for medical or other aid on emergencies, and the drive between it and Abbey Wood was over an exposed plateau across which eastern and northerly winds ranged unchecked. Reluctantly Morris was forced to the conclusion that short of giving up the business (and with it, the power of guiding his life otherwise as he chose) the only alternative left was to give up the beautiful house into which he had put so much of his best thought and work, in which he had enjoyed five years of almost unclouded happiness, and go back to live in London.



A letter to Burne-Jones, dated "In bed, Red House," and written in a very shaky hand, towards the end of November, when he was beginning to recover from the rheumatic fever, shows how deep the disappointment was at having to give up the plan of a joint home, even before the necessity of leaving Red House himself had been forced on him.

"As to our palace of art, I confess your letter was a blow to me at first, though hardly an unexpected one: in short I cried, but I have got over it now; of course I see it from your point of view but I like the idea of not giving it up for good even if it is delusive. But now I am only thirty years old; I shan't always have the rheumatism, and we shall have lots of jolly years of invention and lustre-plates together I hope. I have been resting and thinking of what you are to do: I really think you must think of living a little way out and sharing a studio in town; Stanhope and I might join in this you know. There is only one other thing I can think of, which is when you come back from Hastings come and stay with me for a month or two, there is plenty of room for everybody and everything: you can do your work quietly and uninterruptedly; I shall have a good horse by then and Georgie and J. will be able to drive about, meantime you need not be hurried in taking your new crib. I would give £5 to see you old chap; wouldn't it be safe for you to come down here one day before you go to Hastings?"

At the end of the year the Burne-Joneses removed to Kensington, where they lived for the next three years. The giving up of Red House was fast becoming a settled thing, and it only remained to find a new house in London. It was finally found in one of the old houses in Queen Square, Bloomsbury. The house, with its yard and outbuildings behind, was large enough to serve for both living place and workshops. It was taken on lease from Midsummer, 1865, and thither, in the autumn, the business of Morris and Company was transferred from Red Lion Square, and the Morriszes themselves removed

from Upton in November. Red House was sold, together with such portions of its furniture and decorations as were either unremovable or too cumbrous to transfer to a house for which they had not been designed. Among the treasures thus abandoned were the whole of the tempera paintings executed on the walls, the magnificent sideboard which Webb had designed for the dining-room, both the great painted cupboards; but the painted panels in one of these last were taken out and replaced by plain panels. There is still enough of its original decoration left at Red House to make it unique on that account alone. After he left it that autumn, Morris never set eyes on it again, confessing that the sight of it would be more than he could bear.

If emotion recollected in tranquillity were a working definition of poetry, it is in these five years, so busily tranquil after as long a period of stormy emotion, that one might expect to find poetical production the most copious. But the facts are quite the reverse. The latest poems printed in "The Defence of Guenevere" show the author in the full current of imaginative growth, reaching from manner to manner and just on the point (so one might fancy) of mastering a mixed lyrical and dramatic method capable of the most radiant and astonishing effects. For one reason or another, these beginnings were not destined to bear their natural fruit. The cycle of poems from the Trojan War, which had been planned and begun about that time, was fragmentarily continued at Red House, but remained unfinished and was soon wholly laid aside. When he began to write again, after he resumed life in London, the dramatic method was abandoned, and he reappeared to the world, not as a writer of lyrical romances, but as the author of long continuous narrative poems, of which the type was set and the fame assured by the single one first published, "The Life and Death of Jason."

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CHAPTER VI  
The Earthly Paradise  
1865-1870

Queen Square, in which Morris himself and the firm of Morris & Company took up house together in the autumn of 1865, is a backwater of older Bloomsbury, which then retained some traces of its original dignity as a suburb of the London of Queen Anne. The residential was now becoming mingled with an industrial element. The house on the east side, No. 26, taken by Morris, and the headquarters of his work for the next seventeen years, has disappeared to make room for an extension of the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic. The ground floor was turned into an office and showroom. A large ball-room which had been built at the end of the yard, and connected with the dwelling-house by a wooden gallery, was turned into a principal workshop. There was room for other workshops in the small court at the back, and further accommodation was found when needed in Ormond Yard close by.

With Morris now continuously on the spot, the company became little more than a name as far as regarded the direction and management of the business. Rossetti had never taken much concern in the work. After his wife's death he had been for a long time almost a recluse : now he was living in Chelsea, at the other end of London, and was wholly absorbed in his painting. Faulkner, who had no productive gift, and whose great mathematical ability was somewhat thrown away on keeping the books of the firm, had returned to work in Oxford the year before ; but in his vacations he stayed much with his mother and sisters, who had a house in Queen Square a few doors off, and at these times his intercourse with Morris was constant and his share in the conduct of the business not inconsiderable. Marshall had resumed his own line of work. Burne-Jones and Madox Brown continued to supply designs

for stained glass, and Webb for furniture. But the whole of the production, and, except in glass and furniture, practically the whole of the design was now in Morris's sole hands. All the kinds of work begun at Red Lion Square went on here: and gradually there began to be added other industries which afterwards became the staple production of the firm—weaving, dyeing, and printing on cloth. No long time after Red House was given up, it became possible to have supplied it from the works at Queen Square with almost everything necessary to complete its decoration and furnishing. Such is the irony of human affairs.

But the management of the rapidly extending business had been just at this time put into capable and energetic hands. To Mr. George Warrington Taylor, business Manager of Morris & Company from 1865 until his illness and death at the beginning of 1870, it was mainly due that the business became organized and prosperous. Mr. Taylor was a Catholic, of good family, who had been educated at Eton and was afterwards for some time in the Army; but he had been unfortunate in his affairs and he was then almost penniless. He was full of enthusiasms in art, more especially in music; he was an ardent admirer of Wagner, whose name then was little known in England, and was also an enthusiastic follower of Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites in painting. He had introduced himself to Morris at Red House, and common tastes, to which Taylor added really great knowledge, confirmed the acquaintance. He was a man of great ability and sweetness of character, incapable of taking care of his own affairs, but shrewd and careful in his management of other people's business. The intermittent supervision which was all that Faulkner had been able to give to the accounts of the firm since the Easter of 1864 was now replaced by the continuous care of a man who was not only a master of figures, but an expert in business methods. Morris was able to give to designing and manual work the greater part of the time that had been occupied before by

employment less congenial to him. But no part of the business came amiss to him. There is a record of visits made to Queen Square in its first days by purchasers who had accidentally seen some of his wall-papers; one in 1865, when Morris himself, in a dark blue linen blouse, showed the patterns and made out the bill, and a second in the following year, when he was found at work on the design for the Pomegranate paper. In 1867 the firm obtained what was their first really important commission in non-ecclesiastical decorative work, the decoration of the Green Dining Room at the South Kensington Museum. This piece of work, seen as it is yearly by many thousands of persons, was of great value at the time in making known the name of the firm and the specific character of their work. It remains intact now. The original cost was heavy, and the heads of the Department had some scruples about passing the estimate. But their decision was, even on grounds of economy, fully justified. The excellence of the work, apart from its singular decorative merit, has more than repaid its cost. In the long run it has proved (so I am allowed to state on the authority of the Directors of the Museum) the cheapest piece of work in the buildings; for, except that the ceiling had to be repainted where it was blackened by the smoke from the gaslights, the work has never required any repair in any portion.

While the business thus went on increasing, his leisure also grew on his hands. The saving of time caused by his return to London was, of course, immense. From three to four hours were added to his working day; in spite of all depressions caused by his loss of the country, and by the crowded squalor of the district immediately adjoining this end of Bloomsbury, he felt "as if he could kiss the London pavement" when he got quit of the daily journey. It was in this increased leisure that he resumed, in new forms, the writing of poetry.

The instinct for story-telling, in its simpler forms an almost universal faculty, in its full meaning one of the rarest

and most valuable of literary qualities, was strong in Morris from the first. It appears in the schoolboy tales of romantic adventure for which he was noted at Marlborough, and in the prose romances of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine ; but now he recognized that it was his special and unique gift, and that it might be combined with lyrical qualities into a form of poetry where he could put out all his strength. Strangely enough, English poetry so rich in nearly every form, has seldom reached its highest perfection in this one. After Chaucer, its first and greatest master, narrative poetry remained, with the great exceptions of Dryden and Keats, mostly in the hands of poets of the second rank. It was to Chaucer, therefore, that, even apart from his delight in and kinship with the age of Chaucer, Morris might naturally turn for his model : and the plan of a cycle of romantic stories connected by some common purpose or occasion was directly suggested by the Canterbury Tales.

Some such design had already been talked over at Red House, but no beginning was made till after the removal to London. For the stories, all sources, classical and romantic alike, were to be drawn from ; the world's stock of stories, in fact, which was still much the same as it had been in Chaucer's time, was to be reviewed and selected from anew. The earliest poems written were from the mythology and heroic legends of Greece ; and to these were gradually added others from Eastern, Western and Northern sources. The next idea which occurred was to take half of the stories from the Greek, and half from non-Greek, or what might be broadly described as romantic literature.

In the scheme of " The Earthly Paradise " as it stands, the two corner stones are the Greek and the northern epic cycles, the two greatest bodies of imaginative narration which the world has produced. The stories which he chose out of both are told by Greeks and by Norsemen of the later Middle Ages, in the form in which they would then have been imagined

and in the manner which, to his mind, was the best of all manners. But alongside of these great fountainheads were other sources, European and Oriental; and for these also, subject to the same conditions, a place is found by simple and probable devices. Among the adventurers who had started on the search for eternal youth are Laurence the Swabian, who knows the mediæval chronicles, and Nicholas the Breton, who is familiar with the French epics. Rolf himself, the Norseman who heads the expedition, had spent his youth at Byzantium, where his father was an officer of the Varangian Guard, and in that meeting-place of East and West has heard the stories which became familiar to Europe later through the Arabian Nights. The field of story thus laid open was in fact almost too large, was at all events too large to be fully utilized. Oriental sources were but little drawn upon. The Persian heroic cycle, which Morris placed next in interest after the epics of Greece and Scandinavia, is left wholly untouched; and a single story, that of "The Man who never Laughed again," was taken with much hesitation from the Arabic. Even in dealing with purely European sources much was set aside, including the whole immense mass of the Arthurian cycle.

This architectural design of a great body of poetry, an immense variety of subject brought by certain dominating conceptions within a single method and common scope, grew up gradually in his mind: but meanwhile the poems themselves were being produced with extraordinary speed.

The story of the Quest of the Golden Fleece, one of the richest and most splendid out of the whole Greek mythology, and capable of almost indefinite expansion in detail, grew on his hands till it became obvious that it had outgrown its destined place. Its length, which is between that of the Aeneid and the Odyssey, reached the scale of the regular epic. It was separately published in June, 1867, under the title of "The Life and Death of Jason."

The success of "Jason" was immediate and great. In those years Tennyson reigned almost without a rival; but people had grown weary of his imitators, and his own inspiration no longer, in the opinion of many admirers, kept pace with the elaborate beauty of his execution. It was time for new poetry. This new poem of "The Life and Death of Jason," in which the refinement and charm of mature art were combined with the reawakened sense of romanticism, with extraordinary fertility of movement and incident, and with a largeness, straightforwardness, and sweetness that were all its own, found an audience ready for it. It had just enough of archaism or mannerism to interest critics without rousing their ridicule. With "The Life and Death of Jason" Morris reached real popularity. A second edition (in which numerous corrections were made) was called for almost immediately; and thereafter a steady sale led to successive reprints. The poem received a final revision from the author in the eighth edition, published fifteen years after its original appearance.

Indifferent as Morris habitually was to criticism, the reception which "The Life and Death of Jason" met with was a source of no little encouragement and pleasure, as that of "The Defence of Guenevere" had undoubtedly been chilling and had even joined with other reasons to make him for a time lay aside poetry. The fortunes of the "Jason" were an index to the public reception of the longer work, with which he had already made large progress, and in the course of which, as in the course of all long labours, there were periods when he grew discouraged.

"Naturally I am in good spirits after the puffs," he writes on the 20th of June, "but I reserve any huge delight till I see what the 'Pall Mall' and 'Saturday' say, one of which is pretty sure to act *Advocatus Diaboli*. However I fancy I shall do pretty well now; last week I had made up my mind that I shouldn't be able to publish 'The Earthly Paradise' and was very low: I am as anxious as you are to get on with



that work, and am going to set to work hard now. I hope you won't let any rubbish pass without collaring it. I am too old now for that kind of game."

The seriousness of mind which had been so remarkable in him from the first comes out here again. No great artist was ever less self-conscious about his own work, more absolutely free from either vanity or fatuity. But it was a matter of simple duty with him, in a poem as in a design for decoration, to do everything he did as well as he could. It was not with him a matter of inspiration—he never used either the word or the idea—but of sheer honesty and seriousness of workmanship. "That's jolly!" he would say of a piece of his own work, with the same simplicity as if it were anything else that he admired: yet on the other hand he never spoke, or apparently thought, of poetry as involving more than the craftsman's qualities: singleness of eye, trained aptitude of hand, and such integrity of mind as would not consciously produce "rubbish," or slip it in unnoticed among really honest work. "That talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense, I may tell you that flat," he once said in later years when poetry, not his own, was being discussed: "there is no such thing: it is a mere matter of craftsmanship." The idea that poetry could, or should, be cultivated as an isolated and specific artistic product, or that towards its production it was desirable to isolate one's self from common interests and occupations, and stand a little apart from all the turmoils or trivialities of common life, was one which he found not so much untrue as unintelligible. "If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry," he once said, "he had better shut up, he'll never do any good at all."

In the fresh satisfaction of seeing "The Life and Death of Jason" in print, and finding that it had given him a recognized position among the English poets, he resumed work on "The Earthly Paradise" with renewed heart, and the speed and sustained excellence of his production for the rest of the year were even for him phenomenal. The verse flowed off his pen.

Seven hundred lines were once composed in a single day. During part of the Long Vacation Mr. and Mrs. Burne-Jones and their children were living at Oxford, where Faulkner stayed up and had his mother and sister with him. The Morrisises were also there, in lodgings in Beaumont's Street, he going up to London now and then for the day to look after the business. Every evening he would read aloud what he had written that day. There were excursions on the river in golden summer weather, long remembered as the happiest in more lives than one. Summer ended; and still the flow of rhyme continued as powerful and as sweet.

"The Earthly Paradise" was published by Mr. F. S. Ellis, whose recent acquaintance with Morris had already become a warm friendship. Their relations as author and publisher were ended in 1885 by Mr. Ellis's retirement from business, but they remained attached friends through the rest of Morris's life; Mr. Ellis was much with him in his last illness and was one of his executors.

"How much," Mr. Ellis writes to me, "I owe of the bright side of life to him I cannot reckon. He was the very soul of honour, truthfulness, and justice. Not only would he never deviate from the truth, but in thinking carefully over the matter I do not remember him ever to have made plausible excuses for doing or not doing a thing—he would always say straightforwardly exactly what he meant." The relation of author and publisher, so often one of jealousy and discontent, was in this case without a shadow.

Soon after the publication of the first part of "The Earthly Paradise," Charles Cowden Clarke wrote to him a letter of warm and sympathetic praise. "Your intimacy with Chaucer, especially," he said, "riveted me the moment I felt your appeal; and I am sure that you would not have had a more devoted admirer, and brother in the faith of Love and Beauty, than in my beloved friend and schoolfellow, John Keats, whom I all but taught his letters." In his reply, Morris speaks of "Keats,

for whom I have such boundless admiration, and whom I venture to call one of my masters." It will be easily recognized that, while the world which he elected to make his own, was largely that of Chaucer, his poetical affinities were with Keats more than with any other poet.

Before the end of 1870, the last sheets of "The Earthly Paradise" had left his hands. "I feel rather lost at having done my book," he writes on the 25th of November; "I find now I liked working at it better than I thought. I must try to get something serious to do as soon as may be." And again a few days later: "I confess I am dull now my book is done; one doesn't know sometimes how much service a thing has done us till it is gone: however one has time yet; and perhaps something else of importance will turn up soon."

The pity with which he clung to it, and the forlornness in which it left him when the two had to sever company, he has written down with absolute truth and sweetness in the words of the Epilogue. Shy and reserved in life, as to many matters that lay near his heart, he had all the instinct of the born man of letters for laying himself open in his books, and having no concealments from the widest circle of all. In the verses that frame the stories of "The Earthly Paradise" there is an autobiography so delicate and so outspoken that it must needs be left to speak for itself: and the final words which he puts in the mouth of his book, when he sends it forth to seek a place with Chaucer, are the plain truth about his own life so far as he understood it, as well as his deepest thought on the mystery of things.

For this he ever said, who sent me forth  
To seek a place amid the company;  
That howsoever little was my worth,  
Yet was he worth e'en just so much as I;  
He said that rhyme hath little skill to lie;  
Nor feigned to cast his worser part away  
In idle singing for an empty day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou, keen-eyed, reading me, mayst read him through,  
For surely little is there left behind ;  
No power great deeds unnamable to do ;  
No knowledge for which words he may not find,  
No love of things as vague as autumn wind—  
Earth of the earth lies hidden by my clay,  
The idle singer of an empty day !

Children we twain are, saith he, late made wise,  
In love, but in all else most childish still,  
And seeking still the pleasure of our eyes,  
And what our ears with sweetest sounds may fill ;  
Not fearing Love, lest these things he should kill ;  
Howe'er his pain by pleasure doth he lay,  
Making a strange tale of an empty day.

Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant ;  
Life have we loved, through green leaf and through sere,  
Though still the less we knew of its intent :  
The Earth and Heaven through countless year on year,  
Slow changing, were to us but curtains fair,  
Hung round about a little room, where play  
Weeping and laughter of man's empty day.

## CHAPTER VII

### Morris and Kelmscott

1870-1871

At the age of thirty-six, in the full prime of vigour and in the rising light of fame which had not yet drawn after it its inevitable shadows of imitation and detraction, Morris occupied a position in some ways as enviable as could have been devised for him by his own imaginings. Watt's great portrait is the memorial which represents him at this stage of his life most fully if not most intimately. From it looks out the "powerful and beautiful face" which impressed itself unforgettably

even on those who saw it but once. The massive head with its thickly clustering dark curls ; the vague inexpressive eyes ; the sensitive mouth, a little overweighted by the broad frank brows, are recorded in it with the felicity of genius. One sees in it the dreamer of dreams, as he described himself in a much quoted phrase, who is at the same time the man of action, overflowing with practical energy, and as eager as he had been in the days of his earliest enthusiasm, not only " to do and say and see so many things," but to carry out " things I have thought of for the bettering of the world as far as lies in me."

Of Morris as a poet and as an artist, the truest record is to be found in his actual work. In both cases alike he gave his best to the world quite simply, without ostentation, and without concealment ; and with the world, as a still living influence, what was permanent in it remains. But of the personality behind it, that work, without the actual living speech and gesture and movement of the man, gives only partial glimpses ; nor does it bear any trace at all of what made his personality most unique, that " rum and indescribable deportment " which was a perpetual fascination to all his acquaintance.

By some indefinable mixture of blood, the romantic element which was so powerful in his nature, and which made one side of his inner life one long dream, was united with that natural piety, that steady and almost stolid dutifulness, which has been the saving strength of his nation. Nor upon that side of his nature was he merely a typical Englishman ; he was also a typical Londoner of the middle class, though the force of his genius transformed all the habits and thoughts and acts of his class into something quite individual. In this there was a striking resemblance between him and his great master. Among all his townsmen who have before our own day been eminent as men of letters or artists, it is to Chaucer that one would turn by the first instinct for a parallel. The resemblance even extended to physical features : the corpulent person, the demure smile, the " close silent eye." In his devotion to

angling beyond all other pastimes, and his delight in all the simplest rural pleasures—the joy of the townsman taking a day in the country—he had something in common with Izaak Walton, the scholar and man of letters who sold chintzes and brocades in Fleet Street. With the most famous of all later Londoners there was in certain aspects even a closer analogy, which became more marked in the later years of Morris's life. None of his friends could fail to notice how his potent and imperious personality recalled that of Samuel Johnson. The delight in contradiction and paradox under which there lay a fundamental integrity of intellect; the sanity and strong practical sense; the haunting fear of death, to a degree which would be morbid in any less imaginative nature; even the slovenliness in dress and the inveterate habit of tea drinking, were as marked in the one as in the other.

The combination of the dreaminess which habitually lives in a world of its own creation with a hot and passionate temper is one which is perhaps not rare, but which seldom exists in so intense a form as it did in Morris. In one of his tempers he was capable of almost anything. Once at Red Lion Square he hurled a fifteenth-century folio, which in ordinary circumstances he would hardly have allowed any one but himself to touch, at the head of an offending workman. It missed the workman and drove a panel out of the workshop door. His "tempestuous and exacting company," in the phrase of one of his most intimate friends, had something of the quality of an overwhelming natural force; like the north wind, it braced and buffeted in almost equal measure. He had the incessant restlessness of a wild creature. One of his friends describes him, on the occasion of their first meeting in 1871, as pacing up and down the room like a caged lion. Even at work or at meals he could not sit still for long, but must be continually shifting and fidgeting, getting up to cross the room or look out of the window and then sitting down again. This restless movement was a necessity to him as a means of working off his great

bodily strength and superabundant vitality. In his gusts of temper he seemed insensible to pain and almost superhuman in his strength ; he has been known to drive his head against a wall so as to make a deep dent in the plaster, and bite almost through the woodwork of a window frame. He could lift the heaviest weight in his teeth with apparent ease. Once when describing how he had seen passengers staggering off a Channel steamer loaded with luggage, he illustrated his point to the amusement and horror of his audience by getting a chair under each arm and then stooping and lifting the coal scuttle in his teeth. His eyes, the most quick-sighted among all his acquaintance, had the filmed unobservant look of an eagle's. " When he was young," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says, " he was very handsome, and yet even then his eyes were the most inexpressive I ever saw. They say nothing to you, nor much look at you, but are so swift, they have taken in everything there is to be seen while you are wondering when they will open. If you saw him, he wouldn't look at you, but would know everything you had on, and all your expression, without being seen to look." The only expressive feature of the face was his firm, mobile, and delicately modelled mouth.

The familiar figure of later years had altered but little, except for the inevitable changes of age, from that of his prime. His dress always seemed full of his individuality. Certain youthful indiscretions in the way of purple trousers are remembered as having belonged to the time of the Oxford Brotherhood. But his ordinary dress had no special quality except great simplicity and untidiness. In 1871 he accepted a place on the directorate of the mining company from which a large portion of the income of his mother and sisters as well as his own was derived. For the purpose of attending directors' meetings he kept a tall hat, which he hardly wore on any other occasion, and which caused him untold discomfort. His daughter May remembers, when a little child, finding this strange object in the house, and asking her mother first what

it was, and then whether Papa wore it. Morris himself once said with perfect simplicity to a friend, "You see, one can't go about London in a top hat, it looks so devilish odd." And this was the mere truth in his case; for it was only in conventional dress that he looked really peculiar. When he resigned his directorship four years afterwards he came home from the last meeting he had attended and solemnly sat down upon his tall hat, which was never replaced. In his suit of blue serge and soft felt hat, he had something of the look of a working engineer and something of that of a sailor. He was walking down Kensington High Street one morning when a fireman from the brigade station stopped him and said, "Beg pardon, sir, but were you ever captain of the Sea Swallow?" Indeed a stranger might very well, not only from his clothing, but from his rocking walk and ruddy complexion, have taken him for a Baltic sea-captain. In those days he had not yet adopted the blue cotton shirts which, in later years, became his invariable dress and almost of the essence of his appearance. The capacity for producing and annexing dirt, noted by Rossetti, remained strong in him; and when he began to add dyeing to the other handicrafts which he practised, appearances were completely given up. After he ceased to live at Queen Square in 1872, he very often went to lunch at the Faulkners' house a few doors off. He went along, if the day were fine, without a hat and in his French workman's blouse; and a new housemaid of the Faulkners' when she let him in thus dressed for the first time, went down to the kitchen in some perplexity, describing him to the cook as the butcher. Mr. Ellis, in the days of their first acquaintance, was privately warned by his confidential clerk "not to let that Mr. Morris run up a long account." How he looked to other people was a matter that never entered his head, and he never looked at himself. He had a curious dislike of mirrors. One of the most obvious peculiarities of his house at all times was the absence of mirrors or look-



ing-glasses ; there were none at all in any of the living rooms, and none in his bedroom.

With his great physical strength went the gift of profound and almost dreamless sleep, taken, to use his own phrase in solid bars. From this he awoke at the full height of his energy. Within ten minutes of waking in the morning he had dressed and begun the business of the day. He was often at work at his writing, or his designing, or his loom, by the summer sunrise ; and in those undisturbed hours lay a great part of the secret of the immense copiousness of his production both as a poet and as a decorative artist.

For one who made his whole work into a fascinating and absorbing recreation, and who could turn from one kind of work to another with such ease and swiftness, what is ordinarily called recreation was a thing of less importance than to most men. The only form of sport to which he was thoroughly devoted was angling. When he had a house of his own on the upper Thames, it was his delight at all times of the year, and in all weathers, to escape from London for a day's fishing. He was often accompanied on these expeditions by Ellis, who was an equal enthusiast ; and before that, they had fished over most of the river between Windsor and Richmond. But he never shot, and seldom rode when he could drive. His only other outdoor amusement was playing bowls. The bowling green had been one of the features of Red House, and he played the game a great deal when he had a garden of his own again at Hammersmith. His chief indoor games were backgammon, draughts, and cribbage ; and at one time he played whist pretty regularly. The need of games to pass the time—the reason why nine persons out of ten after they are grown up play games at all—was a thing that he probably never felt. His mind was always working, and his hands never long idle. Nor, in spite of his exceptional swiftness in reading and the immense detailed knowledge which he acquired from books, was he what is called a great reader. His power of rapid reading did not

degenerate into the mere physical craving to read. He always knew whether he wanted to read a book or not, and when he did not, nothing could induce him to read it. His library, until he began to collect early printed books, was not large, nor was it either selected or kept with any special care. He lost books which were not precious in themselves almost as fast as he read them; and his shelves were half filled with a strange collection of the yellow-backed novels which he had bought on railway journeys. His knowledge of mediæval English poetry and ballads was both large and accurate, but the Elizabethan and later authors he knew very imperfectly and read but little. Some of the great names of English poetry were his special aversions. Milton he always abused, though he sometimes betrayed more knowledge of him than he would have been willing to admit; Wordsworth he disliked; he had little admiration for the later works of Browning, once so great a master to him, nor did he care much for anything of Tennyson's after "Maud." Keats he held the first of modern English poets.

Among the great prose authors under whose influence he had fallen at Oxford, Carlyle and Ruskin were the two who continued to hold him most strongly. For the latter, whose influence over him was indeed much the more profound and far-reaching his admiration was sometimes crossed by that defiance which had been observed in his Oxford days to mingle with his enthusiasm for Tennyson. The earlier volumes of "Modern Painters" had been received by him with an admiration akin to worship; he was heard to describe the fifth volume, when it appeared in 1860, in a phrase characteristic of a swallower of formulas, as "mostly gammon." But this was the caprice of a momentary impatience; and all his serious references to Ruskin showed that he retained towards him the attitude of a scholar to a great teacher and master, not only in matters of art, but throughout the whole sphere of human life.

In a very different spirit he was devoted to George Borrow and read him perpetually; and no less devoted to the more

obscured fame of William Cobbett, with whom he had many tastes and prejudices in common, and whose "Rural Rides" he knew almost by heart. Peacock was another of his favourite authors. But volumes which he read perhaps more than any of these, and which he imposed on his friends unflinchingly, were those describing the sayings and doings of the celebrated Mr. Jorrocks. With a feeling that was not all love of paradox, though that had its share, he placed Surtees in the same rank with Dickens as a master of life. In a man who never hunted, who seldom even rode, and to whom the life of a country house in the hunting season was not merely alien but odious, this preference must remain something of an unexplained mystery. Of Dickens himself his knowledge and appreciation were both complete. It is not without value as an illustration of his curiously compounded personality that in the moods when he was not dreaming of himself as Tristram or Sigurd, he identified himself very closely with two creations of a quite different mould, Joe Gargery and Mr. Boffin. Both of those amiable characters he more or less consciously copied, if it be not truer to say more or less naturally resembled, and knew that he resembled. The "Morning, morning," of the latter and the "Wot larks!" of the former he adopted as his own favourite methods of salutation. And one of the phrases that were most constantly on his lips, which he used indiscriminately to indicate his disapproval of anything from Parliamentary institutions to the architecture of St. Paul's Cathedral, was, as all his friends will remember, the last recorded saying of Mr. F.'s Aunt, "Bring him forard, and I'll chuck him out o'winder."

The recollection of these middle years, by those who shared in them as children and are now themselves in the midway path of life, is one of strenuous work mingled with much talk and laughter, and broken by many little feasts and holidays. Nothing was more amazing in Morris, than the way in which he always seemed at leisure, and always was ready for enjoyment.

Neither in work nor in play was he wasteful ; he had learned, in a way that few can, the great secret of not doing, whether it took the guise of work or of amusement, what he did not want to do. The so-called claims of society, so far as they did not represent anything for which he really cared, he quite simply and unaffectedly ignored. He never throughout his life belonged to a club. The drudgery of business he could not wholly escape, but he never allowed it either to absorb his time or to master his intelligence. That neglect of detail which is one of the secrets of success came to him naturally. For the intricacies of business he had no taste and little patience. " I keep fifteen clerks doing my accounts," he once observed, when inveighing against the artificial complexity of modern commerce, " and yet I cannot find out how much money I have got." If he had insisted on finding out, he might perhaps have known, but at the cost of this striking quality of detachment from routine. And for one so simple in his pleasure as he was, the routine of pleasure was as little worth its price to him as the routine of business. But with his chief friends the daily intercourse of pleasure was constant. For years a week day hardly ever passed, when he was in London, without his looking in the Faulkner's in Queen Square. At a later period the supper in the Strand on Thursday evenings with Webb and one or two others, after the meetings of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, was equally constant. His Sunday mornings at Burne-Jones's house, which only ceased with his last illness, have already been mentioned. For many years he also dined there regularly on Wednesdays : " there was no music on those evenings," is a child's recollection, " and he would read aloud."

" Once when I had been upstairs in the nursery at Kensington Square," a friend writes of a visit to Burne-Jones's house in the winter of 1866-7, " I came down and found Morris in the parlour. He was nibbling a pen, and he said after a few words of chat, ' Now you see, I'm going to write poetry, so you'll

have to cut. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped.' So I cut ; and I have a notion that I know what he wrote that evening, as next Saturday when I turned up as I always did, he read us a lot of the story of Psyche. I recollect his remarking that it was very hard work writing that sort of thing. I took it he was speaking of the thrashing Psyche gets at the hands of Venus. He really felt for her, and was evidently glad it was over."

But even when writing poetry he was by no means intolerant of interruption. Some years later Miss Mary De Morgan, when staying at Kelmscott Manor, came one day into the tapestry room, and found him alone there, busy writing at a side table. Seeing his occupation by the look of the manuscript, she was turning to leave the room again, when he called out to her, "Where are you going, Mary?" "I thought you were busy writing poetry," she said. "What the devil has that got to do with it?" he cheerfully replied. "Sit down and tell me a tale."

But while he found perpetual amusement in his work, his amusements had always a strong element of seriousness. "At my first visit," Mr. William De Morgan notes—this was at Red Lion Square in 1864—"I chiefly recollect his dressing himself in vestments and playing on a regal, to illustrate points in connection with stained glass. As I went home it suddenly crossed my mind as a strange thing that he should, while doing what was so trivial and almost grotesque, continue to leave on my memory so strong an impression of his power—he certainly did, somehow." And this was true of all his diversions. Another friend of his who had been staying a few days with him was asked, after he came away, what they had talked about. He confessed that he could not remember that they had talked of anything but eating: "and yet," he added, "I came away feeling myself enlarged and liberalized." For to Morris cookery had an important place among the arts of human life, and he knew a great deal about it in theory, and something

also in practice. His wonderful memory served him here as in other things. Once he astonished a friend by giving off-hand the recipe for some rather unusual dish, and when she asked how he came to know it, told her that he had once had to stay a night at an inn where there was nothing to read but a cookery book, and had assimilated it in the course of the evening. His happiness in a day's fishing was much enhanced by cooking the fish he had caught. A few years later than this, talk had happened to turn on the problems of domestic service. "I wouldn't at all mind being a cook," Morris said, "for I understand cooking." "Now and again," he went on, "I would give you all a good feast, but feasts are spoiled if you have them every day, and I promise you I should keep up good strict discipline. I should say to you, 'Now this is tripe and onion day,' and on another day, 'Now this is porridge day,' and you should not have any choice." "I wouldn't be a parlour maid," he said in the course of the same discussion. "I wouldn't answer bells after a certain time, and if you rang the bells I should shy my boots at them." In the matter of food, as also of wine (in which he had a fine judgment), his taste was more French than modern English. "I always bless God," he once said, "for making anything so strong as an onion." One of his favourite illustrations of the decadence of England from its mediæval state was the barbarism of modern English cookery and in special the abuse or disuse of vegetables. "There are two things," he said in one of his perverse moods, "about which women know absolutely nothing, dress and cookery: their twist isn't that way. They have no sense of colour or grace in drapery, and they never invented a new dish or failed to half spoil an old one."

Above all, beyond even his delight in great buildings, in history, in the masterpieces of human invention, lay in him that intense passion for Nature, "my love of the earth and worship of it," which, soon after the completion of "The Earthly Paradise," obtained a centre in the Manor House at Kelms-

villages. On the Berkshire side a range of heights, low but well designed, rise up from the flat meadows.

"The church, at the north-west end of the village, is small but interesting; the mass of it, a nave with a tiny aisle, transept and chancel, being early English of date, though the arches of the aisles are round-headed.

"When you turn down from the church towards the Thames you come at a corner of the road on the base of the village cross (probably of the 15th century), and then, turning to the left and bearing round to the right, all of which transaction takes place in about two hundred yards, you come face to face with a mass of grey walls and pearly grey roofs which makes the house, called by courtesy the Manor House, though it seems to have no manorial rights attached to it, which I have held for twenty-three years. It lies at the very end of the village on a road which, brought up shortly by a backwater of the Thames, becomes a mere cart-track leading into the meadows along the river.

"Through a door in the high unpointed stone wall you go up a flagged path through the front garden to the porch. The house from this side is a lowish three-storied one with mullioned windows, and at right angles to this another block whose bigger lower windows and pedimented gable-lights indicate a later date. The house is built of well-laid rubble stone of the district, the wall of the latter part being battered over, so to say, with thin plaster which has now weathered to the same colour as the stone of the walls; the roofs are covered with the beautiful stone-slates of the district, the most lovely covering which a roof can have, especially when, as here and in all the traditional old houses of the country-side, they are 'sized down'; the smaller ones to the top and the bigger towards the eaves, which gives out the same sort of pleasure in their orderly beauty as a fish's scales or a bird's feathers.

“ The farm buildings stand to the south of the house : a very handsome barn of quite beautiful proportions, and several other sheds, including a good dove-cot, all built in the same way as the house, and grouping delightfully with it.

“ The garden, divided by old clipped yew hedges is quite unaffected and very pleasant, and looks in fact as if it were, if not a part of the house, yet at least the clothes of it, which I think ought to be the aim of the layer out of a garden.

“ Going under an arched opening in the yew hedge which makes a little garth about a low door in the middle of the north wall, one comes into a curious passage or lobby, a part of which is screened into a kind of pantry by wooden mullions which had once been glazed. The said lobby leads into what was once the great parlour (the house is not great at all remember) and is now panelled with pleasing George I. panelling painted white : the chimney-piece is no doubt of the date of the building, and is of rude but rather amusing country work ; the windows in this room are large and transomed, and it is as pleasant as possible ; and I have many a memory of hot summer mornings passed in its coolness amidst the green reflections of the garden.

“ The tapestry room is over the big panelled parlour. The walls of it are hung with tapestry of about 1600, representing the story of Samson ; they were never great works of art, and now when all the right colours are faded out and nothing is left but the indigo blues, the greys and the warm yellowy browns, they look better, I think, than they were meant to look : at any rate they make the walls a very pleasant background for the living people who haunt the room ; and, in spite of the designer, they give an air of romance to the room which nothing else would quite do.

“ Another charm this room has, that through its south window you not only catch a glimpse of the Thames clover meadows and the pretty little elm-crowned hill over in Berk-



shire, but if you sit in the proper place, you can see not only the barn aforesaid with its beautiful sharp gable, the grey stone sheds, and the dove-cot, but also the flank of the earlier house and its little gables and grey scaled roofs, and this is a beautiful outlook indeed.

“ A house that I love ; with a reasonable love, I think ; for though my words may give you no idea of any special charm about it, yet I assure you that the charm is there ; so much has the old house grown up out of the soil and the lives of those that lived on it ; some thin thread of tradition, a half-anxious sense of the delight of meadow and acre and wood and river ; a certain amount (not too much let us hope) of common sense, a liking for making materials serve one’s turn, and perhaps at bottom some little grain of sentiment :—this I think was what went to the making of the old house.”

Kelmscott was at first taken by Morris in joint-tenancy with Rossetti. The breakdown in Rossetti’s health, which had begun two or three years earlier, was now very marked, and it was hoped that quiet life in a remote country house might do much to restore him to bodily health and relieve his morbid imaginations. For a while he was much more there than Morris, who could not easily be away from London and his work for a long time together. He was there through the summer and autumn of 1871. In 1872 the dangerous illness of which details are given in his biography was followed by a long visit to Scotland, but he was at Kelmscott again from September all through the winter of 1872-3, and for the greater part of the following twelve months. In the summer of 1874 he finally left it ; not a little to Morris’s relief for many reasons. The manor-house soon resumed its quietness and simplicity. The expense of keeping up a country house in permanence was as yet rather a severe strain on Morris’s unaided means ; and the joint-tenancy was for some years resumed with Mr. Ellis as the partner. From this time forth it was the haven of rest to which he always returned with a fresh and deep delight. All

seasons there were alike sweet to him. The following extracts are taken almost at random from familiar letters of different years.

February. "The waters are out a little, owing to the melting snow. It is a cold rather windy day, but not unpleasant; brilliantly sunny at first, now cloudy with gleams of sun at times. It froze last night; but took to a sharp shower in the morning. As to the garden, they are late here; there are two or three crocuses out, but most of them are not above ground even; the winter aconite is not fully in blossom, and the yellow jasmine is over. Snowdrops are everywhere, but mostly double, however they give one a delightful idea of spring about: there are a few violets out and here and there a coloured primrose; and some of the hepatica roots have flowered, but show no leaves. But how pretty it looks to see the promise of things pushing up through the clean un-sooty soil. I think we shall have a beautiful garden this year."

April. "I never yet till now understood how green the grass could be in spring; it is so green that it brings all the distance near and flattens the landscape into a mediæval picture. It is most beautiful; and when we were here in the middle of March the grass was all as grey as grey."

August. "The fishing is pretty much as it was; the river higher and the weeds uncut, though not very visible at the first glance because the water is high. Altogether a very pleasant river to travel on, the bank being still very beautiful with flowers. As for flowers, the July glory has departed as needs must, but the garden looks pleasant though not very flowery. Those sweet sultans are run very much to leaf, but the bees in which they and the scabious are look very pretty, the latter having very delicate foliage. There are two tall hollyhocks (O so tall) by the strawberries, one white, one a very pretty red: there are still a good many poppies in blossom. Few apples, few plums, plenty of vegetables else. Weather doubtful; I woke up this morning to a most splendid but very stormy

sunrise. The nights have been fine, and the moon rises her old way from behind the great barn."

Such was the rich and perpetually varying background on which life unrolled itself here. His love for the place grew with the years, and his joy in it was only troubled by a sense of stolen sweetness which sometimes came over him when he thought of work and duty in London. "I rather want to be in London again," he writes once on a golden day of early September, "for I feel as if my time were passing with too little done in the country; altogether I fear I am a London bird; its soot has been rubbed into me, and even these autumn mornings can't wash me clean of restlessness."

But in the summer of 1871 the visit to Iceland, which he had planned since "The Earthly Paradise" was off his hands, was occupying all his thoughts, and he saw little of Kelmscott till afterwards. At Whitsuntide Webb went down with him to look over it, and Faulkner joined them from Oxford. The house was reported to be in sound condition, and was taken from midsummer. At the beginning of July Morris took his wife and children down, returning himself at once to make the last preparations for his northern voyage.

The journey through Iceland in the summer of 1871 had, both before and after its occurrence, an importance in Morris's life which can hardly be over-estimated, and which, even to those who knew him well, was not wholly intelligible. To enter into his feelings one must imagine a strange combination of Johnson in the Hebrides and Byron in Greece. The heroic stories of Iceland stood in his mind at the head of the world's literature; the deeds which they chronicled were the summit in their tragic force of all human achievement. And the Icelandic Republic represented more than any other state of things recorded in history, the political and social framework of life which satisfied his mind and imagination.

## CHAPTER VIII

### **Love is enough : Period of illumination : Dissolution of the firm**

1871-1874

As soon as he returned to England, Morris resumed the work of illuminating which had already for about a year been one of the main occupations of his leisure, and which for between three and four years more held a foremost place in his interest. During these years he produced a number of books some completed and others not, in very various styles and all of remarkable beauty.

When he took up the art of illumination in 1870, he began to study handwriting as a fine art. By practice he soon mastered it; and the texts of his painted books show a steady advance in skill of execution. The reaction on his own cursive hand was marked and immediate. The beautiful handwriting familiar to his friends for the last five and twenty years was directly due to his study and practice of the art in the period of his work as an illuminator. In the decoration of his painted books—as in everything which had to do with pattern and colour—there is also an advance in splendour of colouring and breadth of design, but the earliest are in their simpler treatment as faultless as the latest: the art of decoration seems to have been in him and to come from his hands full-grown.

The workshops at Queen Square had been slowly encroaching on the living part of the house. The manager was continually appealing for more room to carry on the work. Towards the end of 1872 the family removed from Queen Square. Morris himself kept two rooms for his own private use, and the rest of the house was turned over to the use of the firm, the drawing-room being made into a much-needed show-room, and the upper floors into additional workshops. The

new house was on the high road between Hammersmith and Turnham Green, in a rambling suburb of orchards and market-gardens, and with easy access to the Thames down Chiswick Lane. Before the building of the District Railway it was a pleasant, if somewhat remote, suburb. The house itself was very small, "a very good sort of house for one person to live in, or perhaps two," as its mistress afterwards described it; but there was a large garden, and the quiet was complete. Here Morris lived for six years. The parting from Queen Square took place with little effusion of sentiment. Morris himself was too elated by the prospect of setting up a little dye-shop in the empty basement to care much about the abandonment of the house. It had never been more than a temporary home forced on him by disagreeable necessity.

With a mind full of his first journey to Iceland and excited at the prospect of a second, it is not surprising that his first visit to Italy, which took place this spring, was something of an anti-climax. It was a very short one, and gave him little satisfaction. With the noble Italian art of the earlier Renaissance he had but little sympathy; for that of the later Renaissance and the academic tradition he had nothing but unmingled detestation. Some time in these years his old fellow-pupil, Mr. Bliss, then engaged on researches among the archives of the Vatican, met him in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and pressed him to come with him to Rome. His reply was too characteristic to be forgotten. "Do you suppose," he said, "that I should see anything in Rome that I can't see in White-chapel?"

Of the second journey to Iceland, which took place this summer, there is no need to give any detailed chronicle.

"The journey," he writes of it after his return, "has deepened the impression I had of Iceland and increased my love for it. The glorious simplicity of the terrible and tragic, but beautiful land, with its well-remembered stories of brave men, killed all querulous feeling in me, and has made all the

dear faces of wife and children and love and friends dearer than ever to me. I feel as if a definite space of my life had passed away now I have seen Iceland for the last time : as I looked up at Charles' Wain to-night, all my travel there seemed to come back on me, made solemn and elevated, in one moment, till my heart swelled with the wonder of it : surely I have gained a great deal, and it was no idle whim that drew me there, but a true instinct for what I needed."

Icelandic literature in one form or another still filled the first place in his mind. The notion of rewriting the epic of the Volsungs in English verse, though it was not begun till a good deal later, was already much in his thoughts, and he went on translating the smaller Sagas and executing beautifully written copies of his translations.

He also worked a good deal at drawing from the model, "for my soul's sake chiefly," he quaintly said, "for little hope can I have ever to do anything serious in the thing." "I never," he says on the same occasion, "had the painter's memory which makes it easy to put down on paper what you think you see, nor indeed can I see any scene with a frame, as it were, round it, though in my own way I can realize things visibly enough to myself. But it seems I must needs try to make myself unhappy with doing what I find difficult, or impossible." This unhappiness is not strange to the artistic temperament. But his practice in drawing was not useless to him : and its effects may be seen, not indeed in any marked proficiency in drawing the human figure, but, in a greater breadth and decisiveness of design in his decoration : a matter of no small importance when the designing of patterns for chintzes and woven tapestries became, as it did soon afterwards, one of his chief occupations.

A letter of 1874 shows very clearly all the strange thoughts that were revolving in his mind. He was now forty : and at this middle point of life the spreading and interlacing ways of the future rolled out before him, dark and entangled indeed,

but showing clearer and clearer beyond them some goal to which they all tended.

“ 26, Queen Square,

“ March 26, 1874.

“ My dear Louie,

“ Many thanks for your kind and friendly letter : it was very nice of you to remember my birthday, which was solemnized by my staying at home all day and looking very hard at illuminations, now my chief joy. Yesterday, however, was May's birthday, mine was on Tuesday, on which sad occasion I was forty. Yet in spite of that round number I don't feel any older than I did in that ancient time of the sunflowers. I very much long to have a spell of the country this spring, but I suppose I hardly shall. I have so many things to do in London. Monday was a day here to set one longing to get away: as warm as June: yet the air heavy as often is in England: though town looks rather shocking on such days, and then instead of the sweet scents one gets an extra smell of dirt. Surely if people lived five hundred years instead of threescore and ten they would find some better way of living than in such a sordid loathsome place, but now it seems to be nobody's business to try to better things—isn't mine, you see, in spite of all my grumbling—but look, suppose people lived in little communities among gardens and green fields, so that you could be in the country in five minutes' walk, and had few wants, almost no furniture for instance, and no servants, and studied the (difficult) arts of enjoying life, and finding out what they really wanted : then I think one might hope civilization had really begun. But as it is, the best thing one can wish for this country at least is, meseems, some great and tragical circumstances, so that if they cannot have a pleasant life, which is what one means by civilization, they may at least have a history and something to think of—all of which won't happen in our time. Sad grumbling—but do you know. I have got to go to a wedding next Tuesday : and it enrages me to think that I lack courage to say, I don't care for either of you, and you neither

of you care for me, and I won't waste a day out of my precious life in grinning a company grin at you two.

"And so good-bye again, with many thanks.

"Yours affectionately,  
"William Morris."

Meanwhile the dye-house at Queen Square was occupying more and more of his attention. It had long been plain to him that the art of dyeing, fallen into a deplorable condition since the introduction of the anilines, lay at the foundation of the production of all coloured stuffs whether printed, woven, or embroidered. A profound study which he made this year of all that could be gathered from books on the subject, supplemented by continual experiments in his own vats, left him still unsatisfied; and in the following year he resolved to learn the art practically and thoroughly among the Staffordshire dye-works. This was the beginning of a fresh period in his life of renewed and strenuous activity. Just at present, however, he allowed himself more holiday-making than usual, often spending whole days fishing, and, besides his stays at Kelmscott, going with his family to Belgium in July, and to Mr. and Mrs. George Howard's at Naworth in August.

The visit to Naworth, on which he was accompanied by Burne-Jones, had the additional pleasure of a meeting with Dixon, and a renewal of the affection and enthusiasm of Oxford days. "I would like you to understand," Morris wrote to Mrs. Howard after his visit to Naworth, "as well as my clumsy letter-writing will let you, how very happy I was these few days in the north. \* \* \* I think to shut one's eyes to ugliness and vulgarity is wrong, even when they show themselves in people not unhuman. Do you know, when I see a poor devil drunk and brutal I always feel, quite apart from my aesthetical perceptions, a sort of shame, as if I myself had some hand in it. Neither do I grudge the



triumph that the modern mind finds in having made the world (or a small corner of it) quieter and less violent, but I think that this blindness to beauty will draw down a kind of revenge one day : who knows ? Years ago men's minds were full of art and the dignified shows of life, and they had but little time for justice and peace; and the vengeance on them was not increase of the violence they did not heed, but destruction of the art they needed. So perhaps the gods are preparing troubles and terrors for the world (or our small corner of it) again, that it may once again become beautiful and dramatic withal : for I do not believe they will have it dull and ugly for ever. Meantime, what is good enough for them must content us : though sometimes I should like to know why the story of the earth gets so unworthy."

When the autumn holiday ended, worries awaited him which lasted through the winter and were not finally adjusted—so far as any adjustment was possible—till the following spring. The formation of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., in 1871 has been already recounted : and it has sufficiently appeared how, as the years went on, the business became one in which capital, invention, and control were supplied practically by Morris alone. The business, in which he had embarked all his means, had become not only the daily work of his life, but the main source of his income : and it became necessary, now that he was a man in middle life with a growing family, to put things on a proper footing, and secure a provision in case of need for his children. On the other hand, his partners from their side saw not without uneasiness the extension of a business in whose liabilities—for the firm, formed before the passing of the Act of 1862, was not a limited company—they might at any moment find themselves seriously involved. On both sides, therefore, the dissolution and reconstitution of the firm was indicated as desirable or even necessary. On the 31st of March a circular was issued announcing that the firm had been dissolved and that the business would thenceforward

be carried on under Morris's sole management and proprietorship. It was added that Burne-Jones and Webb, though no longer partners, would continue to help with designs for stained glass and furniture as before. The name of the business remained Morris & Co., a name which had already for some years practically superseded the longer title of Morris, Marshall Faulkner & Co., under which it had been originally registered.

## CHAPTER IX

### **Period of dyeing : The Aeneids : Sigurd the Volsung 1875-1876**

On the 25th of March 1875, when the dissolution and reconstitution of the firm was just completed, Morris wrote to Mrs. Baldwin from Queen Square :

" It was very kind of you and I thank you very much for remembering me and my birthday : I have been a happy man with my friends, nor do I think, as far as my constant affection and good wishes are concerned, that I have done otherwise than to deserve the good hap. I am in the second half of my life now ; which is like to be a busy time with me, I hope till the very end : a time not lacking content, too, I fancy : I must needs call myself a happy man on the whole : and I do verily think I have gone over every possible misfortune that may happen to me in my own mind, and concluded that I can bear it if it should come.

" You would like to see my babies : they are such big girls—and so good ; and even so handsome. Me ! what a boy I feel still to have that responsibility on me, for in spite of my forty-one years I really don't feel a bit older than when Ned and I were living within sound of those tin-pot bells of St. Pancras : well-remembered days when all adventure was ahead !

“ I shall be not very far from you next week : for I am going with Charley-Faulkner, my inevitable travelling-fellow, to look at my fatherland. I think one sign of my increasing years is an increasing desire for travel, that I may see the wonders of the world before it is all gone from me : but I suppose I shall get less and less of that pleasure for some time to come : for I am very busy both with my bread and cheese work, and also with my pleasure work of books. I am publishing a little set of Icelandic stories very soon : also this summer a translation of the Aeneids, which has been my great joy for months of late.”

With such equanimity, even with such elation, it was that he entered on a fresh and crowded period of his life. Out of years of much restlessness and great emotional tension he had emerged, as a traveller might issue from some mountain gorge to a shining and fertile table-land lying broad under the sun. The brooding over death which had for years filled so much of his imagination seemed to fall quite away from him ; and with it, as part of the same process, fell away the striving after things impossible. Before him now lay a life more equable in impulse and more rich in achievement : sweeter-tempered and yet more full than ever of the tears of things, of the desire to do good and to contend against evil, and of unquestioning pursuit of duty not without the courage of hope.

His “ pleasure work of books ” was still to issue in what he himself regarded as his highest achievement in literature, the epic of “ Sigurd the Volsung.” But during the year or eighteen months in which it was composed, his principal daily occupation, on what he calls the bread and cheese side of his activity, was the study and practice of dyeing and the cognate arts. This was necessary in order to lay a secure foundation for the production of textiles of all kinds : and it was not till he had mastered its process that he was able to give his invention and his manual dexterity full scope and produce what he wished. From the very beginnings, the work of the firm had been ham-

pered and often crippled by the difficulty of getting material, either raw or manufactured, which came near Morris's standard. On every side Morris was confronted by the double barrier of material that would not take good colour, and colour which in its own substance was uniformly bad. "I am most deeply impressed," he writes at the end of 1875, "with the importance of our having all our dyes the soundest and best that can be, and am prepared to give up all that part of my business which depends on textiles if I fail in getting them so."

In the beautiful little essay "Of Dyeing as an Art" which Morris contributed to the catalogue of the second exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society in 1889, he gives an account, at once lucid and fascinating, of the processes which he himself had to recover from abuse or disuse through laborious researches and experiments. "The Art of dyeing," he says there in summing up the matter, "is a difficult one, needing for its practice a good craftsman, with plenty of experience." His first dyeings were all done with his own hands, with no help beyond that of a boy who had till then been employed as errand-boy to the glass-painters' workshop. "So well had he prepared himself," Mr. George Wardle says, "that I do not think a single dyeing went wrong, nor was any appreciable quantity of yarn wasted." But in the little dye-house at Queen Square nothing could be done beyond what might be called laboratory experiments: to dye on the scale required for the firm's wants meant falling back on regular dye-works. For these he went to Mr. Thomas Wardle at Leek. He was the brother-in-law of Morris's own manager at Queen Square, and was then already becoming known as one of the first practical authorities on dye-stuffs and the art of dyeing, chiefly as applied to silk and cotton. Morris found him full of interest in the revived method which had long gone out of use, but which Mr. Wardle remembered as going on in his own boyhood, and which some of his older workmen had themselves practised. For about two years from the summer of 1875 Morris paid

numerous and often protracted visits to Leek, where he and Wardle actually restored vegetable dyeing to the position of an important industry.

What he worked at most assiduously at Leek was the lost art of indigo-dyeing. In itself this is one of the most delicate and uncertain vats in its due preparation and maturing. The experienced indigo-dyer is said to know when the fermentation has reached its proper point by an acute sense of smell, where no more scientific tests are found to answer. If the proper moment is not seized, the vat becomes useless. Even when the three days' preparation of the vat has been brought to a successful issue, the proper dipping of the yarn, so as to take the dye evenly, and not let any part of it touch the air for a moment is a matter of the most delicate and accurate handling. "The setting of the blue-vat," Morris says in the essay on Dyeing, "is a ticklish job, and requires, I should say, more experience than any dyeing process." The decay of European indigo-dyeing, itself an art of late importation and not practised in Europe till the end of the sixteenth century, and its replacement by the so-called Prussian blue—(ferro-cyanide of potassium, dyed on an iron basis) early in this century, and long before the invention of the anilines, was mainly due to the greater ease and certainty of the latter process. This very uncertainty and delicacy gave it to Morris an additional touch of fascination beyond that of the madder or weld vats. About this time his hands were habitually and unwashably blue, and in no condition to do fine work.

It was this absorption in dyeing and dye-stuffs which stopped his work as an illuminator. In the earlier months of this year that work had still been going busily on.

Of the great folio manuscript of the *Aeneid* which was now in progress, nearly six books were completed before it was laid aside from pressure of other work. Burne-Jones had drawn for it a series of his most exquisite designs. A good deal of the illumination was executed by Murray after his return to

England. Morris himself never resumed it, though even some fifteen years later I remember seeing him turn over the sheets and hearing him talk of finishing it. Finally he sold it to Mr. Murray, in whose possession it now is. In beauty of handwriting and splendour of ornament it takes far the first place among all his manuscripts.

The re-issue of the volume of poems of 1858 took place that April. He consented to it with a good deal of reluctance. Crude or unworkmanlike work, in poetry just as much as in any other craft, made him uneasy and even wretched : and he felt the immaturity of the workmanship in that volume more keenly than the severest of his critics. When he consented, at Mr. Ellis's repeated instances, to let the volume be published, he insisted that it should be reprinted without the least alteration ; he would not undertake any fresh responsibility for it by any excisions or amendments.

The volume of translations from the Icelandic appeared, under the title of " Three Northern Love Stories," a month or so later. But at the beginning of November a new book appeared, which represented long-continued work of a high order, and challenged a wider and more informed criticism, his verse translation of the *Aeneid*.

The following words were written from Leek, during a visit, to a friend who was passing through one of those darkneses in which the whole substance of life seems now and then to crumble away under our hands. They contain, in brief words that are free from either doubt or arrogance, the confession of his own faith : a matter as to which he was reserved of speech, and only revealed himself under the stress of some unusual emotion.

"Wherein you are spiritless, I wish with all my heart that I could help you or amend it, for it is most true that it grieves me ; but also, I must confess it, most true that I am living my own life in spite of it or in spite of anything grievous that

may happen in the world. Sometimes I wonder so much at all this, that I wish even that I were once more in some trouble of my own, and think of myself that I am really grown callous : but I am sure that though I have many hopes and pleasures, or at least strong ones, and that though my life is dear to me, so much as I seem to have to do, I would give them away, hopes and pleasures, one by one or all together, and my life at last, for you, for my friendship, for my honour, for the world. If it seems boasting I do not mean it : but rather that I claim, so to say it, not to be separated from those that are heavy-hearted only because I am well in health and full of pleasant work and eager about it, and not oppressed by desires so as not to be able to take interest in it all. I wish I could say something that would serve you, beyond what you know very well, that I love you and long to help you : and indeed I entreat you (however trite the words may be) to think that life is not empty nor made for nothing, and that parts of it fit one into another in some way ; and that the world goes on, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful."

SO MUCH AS I SEEM TO HAVE TO DO!—the words were in one form or another habitually on his lips all through his life : yet he never used them complainingly or grudgingly, but rather as one who felt the world perpetual in its interest and variety, and to whom no length of days could be long enough to exhaust either the work that there was for him to do or his own active pleasure in doing it. But to one of his own heroes, whether Greek or Northern, the wish to be once more in some trouble of his own, however lightly uttered, might have seemed a wilful provocation of fate, and only too certain to draw down its own fulfilment. Within the next few months trouble of his own came to him against which he could have made no provision. The form that trouble took was one which can only be briefly touched upon, but which had too profound an effect upon his whole life to be entirely passed over. His elder daughter, now a girl of fifteen, exceptionally bright, clever,

and diligent, was already her father's chosen companion, and gave promise of a brilliant future. In the summer of 1876 her health broke completely down. From this distress his mind was never henceforth free. To all who had the privilege of a close knowledge, his tenderness and unceasing thought and care for her were the most touchingly beautiful elements in his nature ; but his anxiety over her was literally continuous for the remainder of his life.

In spite of the engrossing occupation of the dyeing work and the unsettlement caused by his daughter's illness, the composition of "Sigurd the Volsung" had been advancing swiftly throughout the year. It was published at the end of November. It was but languidly received. In his own judgment, it stood apart from the rest of his poetry, less because it showed any higher perfection in craftsmanship than because the subject was the story which he counted the first in the world, and because he was convinced that he had treated this story with a fidelity and a largeness of manner for which he could answer to his own conscience. The Volsunga Saga had for long seemed to him almost too great a story to be re-told, and too perfectly set forth in the noble Icelandic prose of the twelfth century to gain, or not to lose, from fresh handling. "This is the Great Story of the North," he had written six years before, "which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks : to all our race first, and afterwards, when the change of the world has made our race nothing more than a name of what has been, a story too, then should it be to those that come after us no less than the Tale of Troy has been to us." When at last he resolved to attempt the re-telling, he was bound by an almost impossible loyalty to his original.

The story is undoubtedly unsurpassed in the world for epic grandeur and tragic tension ; and in his version, the most Homeric poem which has been written since Homer, Morris felt that he had given it no inadequate treatment. It is a story at once deeper-searching into human nature and more



universal in its view of human life than that of either the Iliad or the Odyssey. To cool reflection it must be plain that the story of the Iliad is in itself one of the second order : one that had to be filled up with episodes of extraneous interest, and is raised to its rank, as, on the whole, the greatest poetical achievement of mankind, only by the prodigious genius of its final author. The story of the Odyssey, as it is summed up in the well-known words of Aristotle—"a certain man being in foreign lands for many years, and watched jealously by Poseidon, and alone, and things at home being likewise in such case that his substance was spent by suitors and plots laid against his son, arrives after a tempestuous voyage, and discovering himself to certain persons, attacks his enemies and destroys them, but is saved himself"—is a Saga of the simplest order without any dramatic motive of great depth or complexity, but told with incomparable skill, and brought into a wider atmosphere by the Phæacian romance and the Arabian tales of miraculous adventure incorporated with the original story. Had the luminous intelligence to which we owe the Iliad and the Odyssey been applied to a story in itself so tremendous as that of Sigurd, Brynhild, and Gudrun, it is difficult to imagine to what unscaled heights the epic might have risen.

To Morris's mind, at any rate, the philosophy or religion that lived under these half-humanized legends was something quite real and vital : and it substantially represented his own guiding belief. In a summarized statement of the northern mythology which he wrote out about this time, he concludes with the following striking sentences :

"It may be that the world shall worsen, that men shall grow afraid to 'change their life', that the world shall be weary itself, and sicken, and none but faint-hearts be left—who knows? So at any rate comes the end at last, and the Evil, bound for a while, is loose, and all nameless merciless horrors that on earth we figure by fire and earthquake and venom and ravin. So comes the great strife ; and like the kings

and heroes that they loved, here also must the Gods die, the Gods who made that strifeful imperfect earth, not blindly indeed, yet foredoomed. One by one they extinguish for ever some dread and misery that all this time has brooded over life, and one by one, their work accomplished, they die: till at last the great destruction breaks out over all things, and the old earth and heavens are gone, and then a new heavens and earth. What goes on there? Who shall say, of us who know only of rest and peace by toil and strife? And what shall be our share in it? Well, sometimes we must needs think that we shall live again: yet if that were not, would it not be enough that we helped to make this unnamable glory, and lived not altogether deedless? Think of the joy we have in praising great men, and how we turn their stories over and over, and fashion their lives for our joy: and this also we ourselves may give to the world.

“ This seems to me pretty much the religion of the Northmen. I think one would be a happy man if one could hold it, in spite of the wild dreams and dreadful imaginings that hung about it here and there.”

In this spirit it was that Morris approached the story of Sigurd. Nor need it be matter of surprise that the strength of the poem no less than its weaknesses, its unity of spirit and motive no less than the complexity of its scheme, made it pass over the heads of a public little accustomed to the strenuous task of embracing and taking in any work of great scope and organic structure. Whether or not it be true, as is often lightly said, that the age for epics is over, the time when “ Sigurd ” appeared was emphatically an age of the idyl, and unresponsive to the appeal of the larger poetic architecture. Morris himself never concealed his own opinion of the merits of the poem. So he did not let the tepid welcome which “ Sigurd ” met with weigh on his spirits. Two months after its publication he writes from Leek, where he was again busy among his dye vats and ordering three hundredweight of

poplar-twigs for experiments in yellow dyeing (the colour they gave did not turn out sufficiently fast to satisfy him) :

“ My ill temper about the public was only a London mood and is quite passed now : and I think I have even forgotten what I myself have written about that most glorious of stories, and think about it all (and very often) as I did before I began my poem.”

## CHAPTER X

### **The Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings : The Eastern Question Association : Period of Textiles**

1877-1878

Almost without knowing it, Morris was now beginning to take a part in public action and political life. From both he had hitherto, in common with the circle of artists to which he belonged, kept apart as from matters that did not concern him. But this abstention was not natural to him, as it often is to artists and men of letters. His innate Socialism—if the word may for once be used in its natural sense and not as expressing any doctrine—was, and had been from his earliest beginnings, the quality which, more than any other, penetrated and dominated all he did. In this year it forced itself out in two different channels, which would by ordinary people be distinguished from one another as belonging to the fields of art and politics, but which to Morris himself, only represented two distinct points at which the defence of life against barbarism could be carried on. One of these movements he originated, or at least put into active existence, by the formation of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings. The other he aided with all his power by work and money spent in the service of the Eastern Question Association.

The destruction of ancient buildings which, throughout the whole of Morris's life, he had seen going on almost un-

checked, whether from mere careless barbarism or under the pretext of restoration, had been a thing against which it seemed helpless for any one to fight. It had hitherto been attacked only in isolated instances, by individuals, without any clear statement of principle or any certainty of continuous action. It could only be combated with any hope of success through some permanent and organized body, to whose representations some attention would have to be paid, and who would have time and money to spend on their work. The formation of a society wholly devoted to this purpose seems first to have occurred to Morris's mind in the autumn of 1876, and in connexion with two definite instances of restoration which then came under his own eyes. One was that of Lichfield Cathedral, which he and Wardle had been visiting from Leek. The other was that of the beautiful parish church near Kelmscott. At the beginning of March 1877, an account of the proposed restoration of the splendid Abbey church at Tewkesbury roused him to take practical steps. Mr. F. G. Stephens had for some years been upholding the cause of ancient buildings in the *Athenaeum* newspaper with much courage and persistency, singling out for special attack the wholesale operations carried out in so many cathedral and parochial churches by Sir Gilbert Scott. To the *Athenaeum* Morris now turned for aid in realizing his project. On the 5th of March he wrote to it as follows:

“ My eye just now caught the word ‘ restoration ’ in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott. Is it altogether too late to do something to save it,—it and whatever else of beautiful and historical is still left us on the sites of the ancient buildings we were once so famous for ? Would it not be of some use once for all, and with the least delay possible, to set on foot an association for the purpose of watching over and protecting these relics, which, scanty as they are now become, are still wonderful treasures, all the more priceless in this age of the world,

when the newly invented study of living history is the chief joy of so many of our lives?

"Your paper has so steadily and courageously opposed itself to these acts of barbarism which the modern architect, parson, and squire call 'restoration,' that it would be waste of words to enlarge here on the ruin that has been wrought by their hands; but, for the saving of what is left, I think I may write a word of encouragement, and say that you by no means stand alone in the matter and that there are many thoughtful people who would be glad to sacrifice time, money, and comfort in defence of those ancient monuments: besides, though I admit that the architects are, with very few exceptions, hopeless, because interest, habit, and ignorance bind them, and that the clergy are hopeless, because their order, habit, and an ignorance yet grosser, bind them; still there must be many people whose ignorance is accidental rather than inveterate, whose good sense could surely be touched if it were clearly put to them that they were destroying what they, or, more surely still, their sons and sons' sons, would one day fervently long for, and which no wealth or energy could ever buy again for them.

"What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient buildings are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope."

The train caught fire. A fortnight after this letter appeared, the Athenaeum announced that his proposal was likely to take effect, and within another fortnight the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings had been constituted and had held its first meeting, Morris acting as secretary. The eminent men in many walks of life who at once joined it were sufficient to protect it from either contempt or ridicule; and if it has not

stayed destruction, it has at all events saved much that would otherwise have been lost, and has had an immense though quiet influence in raising the standard of morality on the subject of ancient buildings throughout England. Architects and owners alike now take a wholly new and wholly beneficial sense of their responsibility. The principles of the Society are given by Morris with unsurpassed lucidity and force in the statement issued by it on its foundation.

“ Within the last fifty years a new interest, almost like another sense, has arisen in these ancient monuments of art ; and they have become the subject of one of the most interesting of studies, and of an enthusiasm, religious, historical, artistic, which is one of the undoubted gains of our time ; yet we think that if the present treatment of them be continued, our descendants will find them useless for study and chilling to enthusiasm. We think that those last fifty years of knowledge and attention have done more for their destruction than all the foregoing centuries of revolution, violence, and contempt.

“ For architecture, long decaying, died out, as a popular art at least, just as the knowledge of mediæval art was born. So that the civilized world of the nineteenth century has no styles of other centuries. From this lack and this gain arose in men’s minds the strange idea of the Restoration of ancient buildings ; and a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that, and the other of its history—of its life, that is—and then to stay the hand at some arbitrary point, and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was.

“ Of all the Restorations yet undertaken the worst have meant the reckless stripping a building of some of its most interesting material features ; while the best have their exact analogy in the Restoration of an old picture, where the partly perished work of the ancient craftsman has been made neat and smooth by the tricky hand of some unoriginal and thoughtless hack of to-day. If, for the rest, it be asked us to specify

what kind or amount of art, style, or other interest in a building, makes it worth protecting, we answer, anything which can be looked on as artistic, picturesque, historical, antique, or substantial : any work, in short, over which educated artistic people would think it worth while to argue at all.

“ It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them, to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands ; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one ; in fine, to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying.”

The rather lumbering title of the Society was at an early date replaced for familiar usage by the more terse and expressive name of the Anti-Scrape, a word of Morris's own invention. Two months after its formation he writes to a friend : “ By the way you have not yet joined our Anti-Scrape Society : I will send you the papers of it : the subscription is only 10/6, and may save you something if people ask for subscriptions to restorations by enabling you to say, ‘ I am sorry, but be damned—look here.’ ”

Meanwhile Morris had been swept into politics by an impulse no less powerful and sincere against barbarism. If ancient buildings were all but alive to him, and he felt their ruin and defacement as a kind of physical torture, his sympathy with oppressed fellow-creatures rather gained than lost in force from this feeling. The collapse of the Turkish Government in its European provinces during the year 1876 had been accompanied by massacres and torture on a prodigious scale

in Bulgaria, the news of which in England, at first received with incredulous apathy, gradually roused an overpowering horror and indignation. The armed intervention of Russia, though it did not take place till the following April, had been long foreseen ; and feeling in England was torn violently asunder between traditional jealousy of Russia and sympathy with the oppressed Christian populations. For long the former feeling was predominant both in the Government and in the nation ; and the group of persons who towards the end of 1876 founded the Eastern Question Association were at first a minority, trifling in number, however powerful in the justice of their cause and the strength of their convictions. Into this work Morris flung himself heart and soul : he was treasurer of the Association, and through the Russo-Turkish War, and the confused and hostile negotiations which followed, worked hard for it with tongue and pen.

Into the details of the historic controversy this is no place to enter : it is one long ago judged by time. But the manifesto which Morris issued in May, 1877, when the recent declaration of war by Russia had brought the Eastern Question into a very acute and dangerous stage, is remarkable, less for any unusual insight into what is called the political situation, than for the body to whom he addressed it, and the tone it took on political action in the largest sense. It contains his later socialist teaching as yet folded in the germ.

“ To the working men of England ” this manifesto is headed : and it contains this remarkable passage :

“ Who are they that are leading us into war ? Greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of the army and navy (poor fellows !), worn-out mockers of the clubs, desperate purveyors of exciting war-news for the comfortable breakfast-tables of those who have nothing to lose by war ; and lastly in the place of honour, the Tory Rump, that we fools, weary of peace, reason, and justice, chose at the last election to represent us. Shame and double shame, if we march under



such leadership as this in an unjust war against a people who are not our enemies, against Europe, against freedom, against nature, against the hope of the world.

“ Working men of England, one word of warning yet : I doubt if you know the bitterness of hatred against freedom and progress that lies at the hearts of a certain part of the richer classes in this country : their newspapers veil it in a kind of decent language ; but do but hear them talking among themselves, as I have often, and I know not whether scorn or anger would prevail in you at their folly and insolence. These men cannot speak of your order, of its aims, of its leaders, without a sneer or an insult : these men, if they had power (may England perish rather !), would thwart your just aspirations, would silence you, would deliver you bound hand and foot for ever to irresponsible capital. Fellow-citizens, look to it, and if you have any wrongs to be redressed, if you cherish your most worthy hope of raising your whole order peacefully and solidly, if you thirst for leisure and knowledge, if you long to lessen these inequalities which have been our stumbling-block since the beginning of the world, then cast aside sloth and cry out against an Unjust War, and urge us of the middle classes to do no less.”

As summer passed over, the shadow of imminent war lifted : but in autumn Morris was once more eagerly at work on the Committee, which, under the presidency of Lord Lawrence, strove unavailingly to prevent the Afghan campaign, which was accepted by the war-party in England as an equivalent for open hostilities with Russia. At the beginning of 1878, when the Russian troops had forced the Balkans, the crisis became acute again. “ This is terrible news,” he writes on the 5th of January, when war seemed all but certain. “ I confess I am really astounded at the folly that can play with such tremendous tools in this way ; and more and more I feel how entirely right the flattest democracy is.” At a meeting held in Exeter Hall on the 16th to protest against the threatening

attitude of the Government, Morris appeared for the first time as a writer of political verse. "Wake, London Lads!" a stirring ballad written by him for the occasion, was distributed in the hall and sung with much enthusiasm. Here, as in the manifesto of the previous year, the appeal is to the "political working man," as Morris calls him in a letter describing this meeting, and is made in the name of the future and its hope. When the crisis in the East was finally past, it left Morris thoroughly in touch with the Radical leaders of the working class in London, and well acquainted with the social and economic ideas which, under the influence of widening education and of the international movement among the working classes, were beginning to transform their political creed from an individual Radicalism into a more or less definite doctrine of State Socialism.

Morris's absorption in wider interests during this period was accompanied by a fresh development of energy in his own professional work. The dyeing and calico printing industry, still mainly carried on at Leek was now established as an important branch of the business, and the designing of patterns for chintzes and figured silks was part of his daily work. Weaving both in silk and wool had also taken its place alongside of dyeing in his own workshops. "I am dazzled," he writes in March, 1877, "at the prospect of the splendid work we might turn out in that line." A French brocade-weaver from Lyons, M. Bazin, was brought over in June to set up the first silk-loom.

In November, 1877, Mrs. Morris and the two girls had gone to spend the winter at Oneglia on the Italian Riviera, where Morris himself was to join them in spring and make a tour with them through Northern Italy. His letters to Oneglia during these months give an unusually full account of his life and work during the winter. They are full of the Eastern Question, and the work of the Anti-Scrape, and the progress made by Bazin at the silk-loom in Ormond Yard, where "a

poor old ex-Spitalfields weaver" had been found to help; and also of a new and at first to him very laborious employment, that of composing and delivering lectures. The first lecture he ever gave in public was on the Decorative Arts. It was delivered before the Trades Guild of Learning, in what he calls "a dismal hole near Oxford Street," on the 4th of December. It was published immediately afterwards by Messrs. Ellis and White as a Pamphlet; and was reprinted, under the title of "The Lesser Arts," as the first of the collected addresses published in the volume of "Hopes and Fears for Art."

The strain and excitement of the political campaign of that winter ended in a severe attack of rheumatic gout, which seized and quite crippled him when he went out to join his family in Italy towards the end of April. It prevented him from being much more than a passive participator in the long-planned and eagerly awaited Italian tour. The machinery had been taxed beyond its power: he never quite regained his old strength and in the following year there can be traced in his letters the first shadow of advancing age: not indeed a surprising thing in a man who had accomplished work so immense in its mass and so high in its quality by the age of forty-five.

On the way to Venice the first view of the Lago di Garda gave him a shock of delight more powerful than anything else he saw in Italy. "What a strange surprise it was," he says, "when it suddenly broke upon me, with such beauty as I never expected to see: for a moment I really thought I had fallen and was dreaming of some strange sea where everything had grown together in perfect accord with wild stories." At Venice itself he was so lame that he could only crawl into a few churches. In his letters it is difficult to distinguish the depression of his illness from his pain at the decay, and his horror at the restorations, going on all round him: "It is sad to think," he sums the matter up, "that our children's children will not be able to see a single genuine ancient building in Europe." A

visit to Torcello ("it was a great rest to be among the hedges and the green grass again, and to hear the birds singing ; swifts are the only songsters in the city ") he speaks of as almost his one unmixed pleasure there.

Indeed he was always uneasy away from the earth and the green grass; and when they left Venice for Padua and Verona his spirits began to rise. "What a beautiful and *pleasant* place it is," he writes of Padua, "with the huge hall dividing the market place, and the endless arcades everywhere : or the Arena Chapel in the midst of the beautiful garden of trellised vines, all as green as the greenest just now."

From Verona he writes a little later : "I am more alive again, and really much excited at all I have seen and am seeing, though sometimes it all tumbles into a dream and I do not know where I am. Many times I think of the first time I ever went abroad, and to Rouen, and what a wonder of glory that was to me when I first came upon the front of the Cathedral rising above the flower-market. It scarcely happens to me like that now, at least not with man's work, though while it does with bits of the great world, like the Garda Lake the other day, or unexpected sudden sights of the mountains. Even the inside of St. Mark's gave one rather deep satisfaction, and rest for the eyes, than that strange exaltation of spirits, which I remember of old in France, and which the mountains give me yet."

Before going out to Italy he had arranged to take a new house in London, that one in which he lived for the rest of his life, on the Upper Mall at Hammersmith. It is a large Georgian house, of a type, ugly without being mean, familiar in the older London suburbs. It is only separated from the river by a narrow roadway, planted with large elms. The river indeed was so near a neighbour that at exceptionally high tide it occasionally brimmed over the sill of the water-gate in the low river wall, crossed the roadway, and flooded the cellarage of the house. The parapet along the edge had afterwards to

be made continuous to avoid this danger. On bright days the sunlight strikes off the water and flickers over the ceilings : many barges and sailing boats go by with the tide, and the curve of the river opens out two long reaches, up by Chiswick Eyot with the wooded slopes of Richmond in the background, and down through Hammersmith Bridge. Behind the house a long rambling garden, in successive stages of lawn and orchard and kitchen-garden, still preserves some flavour of the country among the encroaching mass of building which is gradually swallowing up the scattered cottages, low and roofed with weathered red tiles, that then lay between the river and the high road. When Morris took it, it had just been vacated by Dr. George Macdonald, and was known as The Retreat ; this name, as rather suggestive of a private asylum, he at once changed, and called it Kelmscott House, after his other home on the bank of the same river. The hundred and thirty miles of stream between the two houses were a real, as well as an imaginative, link between them. He liked to think that the water which ran under his windows at Hammersmith had passed the meadows and grey gables of Kelmscott ; and more than once a party of summer voyagers went from one house to the other by water, embarking at their own door in London and disembarking in their own meadow at Kelmscott.

Kelmscott House was taken from Midsummer, and the Morris moved into it at the end of October. Under his skilful hands, the long drawing-room of which he speaks above—a handsome room with a range of five windows, filling the whole width of the house and looking out through the great elms over the river—had been made into a room quite unique in the quietness and beauty of its decoration. It was sufficiently out of the London dirt to admit of being hung with his own woven tapestry. The painted settle and cabinet, which were its chief ornaments, belonged to the earliest days of Red House ; the rest of the furniture and decoration was all in the same spirit, and had all the effect of making the room a mass of subdued yet glowing colour, into which the eye sank with a sort of active

sense of rest. Morris's own study on the ground floor was severely undecorated. It had neither carpet nor curtains; the walls were mostly filled with plain bookshelves and a square table of unpolished oak scrubbed into snowy whiteness, with a few chairs, completed its contents. One of the first things he did after taking possession of the house was to have a tapestry-loom built in his bed-room, at which he might practise the art of weaving with his own hands. He was often up at work at his loom with the first daylight in spring and summer mornings.

The embroideries, no less than the woven stuffs, produced at Queen Square, took a fresh start from the introduction of home-dyed silks. This is a point on which all the embroiderers who worked for him lay special emphasis. "There was a peculiar beauty in his dyeing," says Mrs. Holiday, one of the most highly qualified of his later pupils in the art of embroidery, "that no one else in modern times has ever attained to. He actually did create new colours; then in his amethysts and golds and greens, they were different to anything I have ever seen; he used to get a marvellous play of colour into them. The amethyst had flushings of red; and his gold (one special sort), when spread out in the large rich hanks, looked like a sunset sky. When he got an unusually fine piece of colour he would send it off to me or keep it for me; when he ceased to dye with his own hands I soon felt the difference. The colours themselves became perfectly level, and had a monotonous prosy look; the very lustre of the silk was less beautiful. When I complained, he said, 'Yes, they have grown too clever at it—of course it means they don't love colour, or they would do it.'"

"I am writing in a whirlwind of dyeing and weaving," says a letter of March, 1879, "and even as to the latter rather excited by a new piece just out of the loom, which looks beautiful, like a flower garden." Even at Kelmscott he missed the daily fascination of his work. "Somehow I feel," he wrote from there a few months later, "as if there must

soon be an end for me of playing at living in the country : a town-bird I am, a master-artisan, if I may claim that latter dignity." And again that same autumn, when he was much worried by work for the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, " Lord Bless us," he breaks out, " how nice it will be when I can get back to my little patterns and dyeing, and the dear warp and weft at Hammersmith."

## CHAPTER XI

### London and Kelmscott : Theories of art and life

1879-81

But work among his dye-pots and looms, interesting and fascinating as he found it, could not fill up the whole of his mind. In spite of the variable excitement and the more settled rest of this daily work, voices from an outer world kept calling him more and more imperiously. For a time he tried to think that it was the voice of poetry that was calling, but the fancy brought no real conviction. " As to poetry," he writes in October, 1879, " I don't know, and I don't know. The verse would come easy enough if I had only a subject which would fill my heart and mind : but to write verse for the sake of writing is a crime in a man of my years and experience." He had in fact produced his poetry: the instincts of creation and invention had to find new outlets ; and gradually the fabric of social life itself became the field which, as he had done with specific arts already, he tried to redeem from commercialism and ugliness, and to reinstate on a sounder basis. He recognised the gravity of the enterprise ; yet it did not then seem to him a desperate one. " I have seen a many wonders, and have a good memory for them ; and in spite of all grumblings have a hope that civilized people will grow weary of their worst follies and try to live a less muddled and unreasonable life ; not of course that we shall see much of that change in the remnant that is left of our days."

In this hope, and for work at anything that might lead towards its accomplishment, he was willing to give up ease and leisure, and much of what made life desirable. And one can trace the conviction growing in him very slowly, that towards forwarding the work some renunciation was necessary—it might be, he thought with a sudden pang, the giving up of Kelmscott. "I am sitting now, 10 p.m.," he writes from there in late autumn, "in the tapestry-room, the moon rising red through the east-wind haze, and a cow lowing over the fields. I have been feeling chastened by many thoughts, and the beauty and quietness of the surroundings, which latter, as I hinted, I am, as it were, beginning to take leave of. That leave-taking will, I must confess, though you may think it fantastic, seem a long step towards saying good-night to the world."

His ease, his leisure, in effect we may say his life, he did give up for the sake of this hope; but the giving up of Kelmscott was a pang that was spared to him. Nor would it be right to think of him as habitually occupied by these somewhat sombre broodings. When he did throw off work, his enjoyment remained that of a child.

During the following winter, the manufacture of the Hammersmith rugs and carpets went busily on at Kelmscott House. By May enough specimens had been successfully produced to allow of a public exhibition of them. The circular written by Morris and issued by the firm on that occasion states the facts very clearly. This new branch of the business was "an attempt to make England independent of the East for carpets which may claim to be considered works of art."

He was a regular visitor and adviser at the South Kensington Museum and at the Royal School of Art Needlework. And alongside of all the rest, he carried on, until the General Election of 1880, vigorous political work in London. In 1879, he was treasurer of the National Liberal League, an association formed to a large extent from the representatives of that working-



class London Radicalism which had organized itself in opposition to the Eastern policy of the Government in 1876. At the meetings of this League, he made his first essays in the practice of extempore speech. It was a thing which, partly from constitutional shyness and partly from the pressure of thought behind his language, came to him, so far as it did come at all, with great difficulty. "When he spoke off-hand," a colleague of his at this time notes—and the description is highly characteristic—"he had a knack at times of hammering away at his point until he had said exactly what he wanted to say in exactly the words he wished to use, rocking to and fro the while from one foot to the other."

In the summer of 1880 the long-planned voyage of the whole family from Hammersmith to Kelmscott by water actually took place. All cares were put aside for it, and the light-heartedness of fifteen years before resumed its sway for a happy week.

"I can't pretend," he writes, when on the point of leaving Kelmscott finally that autumn, "not to feel being out of this house and its surroundings as a great loss. I have more than ever at my heart the importance for people of living in beautiful places; I mean the sort of beauty which could be attainable by all, if people could but begin to long for it. I do most earnestly desire that something more startling could be done than mere constant private grumbling and occasional public speaking to lift the standard of revolt against the sordidness which people are so stupid as to think necessary."

The river expedition was repeated in the following year. "On the whole the hazardous experiment of trying the same expedition twice over has succeeded," was Morris's report after it was over.

It was in the strength of that autumn's stay at Kelmscott, and all the thoughts through which it led him, that he reached a point to which he had not till then attained in width of outlook and depth of insight. An address delivered by him on the 13th

of October at the annual meeting of the School of Science and Art connected with the Wedgwood Institute at Burslem, is both one of the most brilliant and one of the most significant of his published writings. It contains, in a way which none of his other published lectures of that period seem to approach, the sum of all his earlier and the germ of all his later doctrine.

"I myself," he said in that address, "am just fresh from an out-of-the-way part of the country near the end of the navigable Thames, where within a radius of five miles are some half-dozen tiny village churches, every one of which is a beautiful work of art. These are the works of the Thames-side country bumpkins, as you would call us—nothing grander than that. If the same sort of people were to design and build them now, they could not build anything better than the ordinary little plain Nonconformist chapels that one sees scattered about new neighbourhoods. That is what they correspond with, not an architect-designed new Gothic Church. The more you study architecture the more certain you will become that I am right in this, and that what we have left us of earlier art was made by the unhelped people. Neither will you fail to see that it was made intelligently and with pleasure.

"That last word brings me to a point so important that, at the risk of getting wearisome, I must add it to my old sentence and repeat the whole. Time was when everybody that made anything made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, *and it gave them pleasure to make it*. Whatever I doubt, I have no doubt of that.

"I know that in those days life was often rough and evil enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery; yet sorely as poor folks needed a solace, they did not altogether lack one, and that solace was pleasure in their work. Much as the world has won since then, I do not think it has won for all men such perfect happiness that we can afford to cast aside any

solace that nature holds forth to us. Or must we for ever be casting out one devil by another? Shall we never make a push to get rid of the whole pack of them at once?

“As I sit at my work at home, which is at Hammersmith, close to the river, I often hear some of that ruffianism go past the window of which a good deal has been said in the papers of late, and has been said before at recurring periods. As I hear the yells and shrieks and all the degradation cast on the glorious tongue of Shakespeare and Milton, as I see the brutal reckless faces and figures go past me, it rouses the recklessness and brutality in me also, and fierce wrath takes possession of me, till I remember, as I hope, I mostly do, that it was my good luck only of being born respectable and rich, that has put me on this side of the window among delightful books and lovely works of art, and not on the other side, in the empty street, the drink-steeped liquor-shops, the foul and degraded lodgings. I know by my own feelings and desires what these men want, what would have saved them from this lowest depth of savagery, employment which would foster their self-respect and with the praise and sympathy of their fellows, and dwellings which they could go to with pleasure, surroundings which would soothe and elevate them; reasonable labour, reasonable rest. There is only one thing that can give them this—art.”

The progress of his mind towards active Socialism during these two years is recorded in the private letters where he set down his thoughts or his beliefs from one day to another with complete transparency. Through many fluctuations of mood one may trace a gradual advance. Some people, even among those who knew him well, thought of his Socialism as a sudden and unaccountable aberration; or at all events fancied it a movement into which he flung himself in a sudden fit of enthusiasm, without having thought the matter out, and acting on a rash impulse. How much this is the reverse of the truth becomes plain when one traces the long struggle, the deep brooding through which he arrived at his final attitude, and notes

the distaste and reluctance which he often felt for the new movement, which at other moments shone out to him as the hope of the world.

"I am in rather a discouraged mood," he writes in a New Year's letter in 1880, "and the whole thing seems almost too tangled to see through and too heavy to move. Happily though, I am not bound either to see through it or move it but a very little way : meantime I do know what I love and what I hate, and believe that neither the love nor the hatred are matters of accident or whim." Beyond all he seems to have been oppressed by a sense of loneliness in his new thoughts. Any moral support from whatever quarter was hailed by him with touching gratitude. To misconstruction he had long been accustomed. "I have had a life of insults and sucking of my brains," he once said, with no exaggeration of the truth. A man of means and University education who deliberately kept a shop, a poet who chose to exercise a handicraft, not as a gentleman amateur, but under the ordinary conditions of handicraftsmen, was a figure so unique as to be all but unintelligible. Sometimes, though rarely, he turned upon his persecutors. "It is a real joy to find the game afoot," he breaks out a few months later ; "that the thing is stirring in other people's minds beside mine, the poetic upholsterer, as Sir Ed. Beckett calls me, meaning (strange to say) an insult by that harmless statement of fact."

In another letter written on the New Year's Day of 1881 he regards the matter with a greater sense of responsibility and a more practical seriousness.

"I have of late been somewhat melancholy (rather too strong a word, but I don't know another), not so much so as not to enjoy life in a way, but just so much as a man of middle age who has met with rubs (though less than his share of them), may sometimes be allowed to be. When one is just so much subdued one is apt to turn more specially from thinking of one's own affairs to more worthy matters ; and my mind is very full

of the great change which I hope is slowly coming over the world, and of which surely this new year will be one of the landmarks. Though to me, as I suppose to you, every day begins and ends a year, I was fain to catch hold of an ancient custom ; nor perhaps will you think it ceremonious or superstitious if I try to join thoughts with you today in writing a word of hope for the new year, that it may do a good turn of work toward the abasement of the rich and the raising up of the poor, which is of all things most to be longed for, till people can at last rub out from their dictionaries altogether those dreadful words 'rich and poor'.

"How people talk as if there were no wrongs of society against all the poor devils it has driven demented in one way or other ! Yet I don't wonder at rich men trembling either : for it does seem as though a rising impatience against the injustice of society was in the air ; and no wonder that the craziest heads, that feel this injustice most, breed schemes for setting it all right with a stroke of lightning. There was a curious and thoughtful letter from America in Tuesday night's Echo, the writer of which seemed to have been struck by this thought as to matters over there : quoth he, there is no respect for people in authority there : every one knows that they are there by virtue of a bargain struck by selfishness and selfishness, (I quote his matter only,) and a sort of despair besets people about it. All political change seems to me useful now as making it possible to get the social one : I don't mean to say that I myself make any wide distinction between political and social ; I am only using the words in the common way."

And once more three weeks later :

"I don't quite agree with you in condemning grumbling against follies and ills that oppress the world at large, even among friends ; for you see it is but now and then that one has a chance of speaking about the thing in public, and meantime one's heart is hot with it, and some expression of it is like to quicken the flame even in those that one loves and respects

most, and it is good to feel the air laden with the coming storm even as we go about our daily work or while away time in light matters. To do nothing but grumble and not to act—that is throwing away one's life ; but I don't think that words on our cause that we have at heart do nothing but wound the air, even when spoken among friends ; 'tis at worst like the music to which men go to battle. Of course if the thing is done egotistically, 'tis bad so far ; but that again, how to do it well or ill, is a matter of art like other things."

But "the cause" a term perhaps specifically used by Morris for the first time in the letter quoted above, was now shaping itself in his mind to something on which the whole of his life both as an artist and as a human being converged : and it was in London, where he saw the misery of the present most acute, that he also discerned, or thought he discerned, some lifting on the horizon, and some glimmer of future hope. To retreat from the pressure of social problems into "a little Palace of Art of one's own" (in the phrase of five and twenty years back) was now as before possible—was more possible than ever now, when his business as a manufacturer and decorator was firmly established and capable of large expansion. Just at this time he was carrying out decorations on a large scale at St. James's Palace, which included the hanging of the Throne and Reception rooms with specially designed silk damask, the hand-painting of the ceilings and cornices, and the designing of a special paper for hanging the main staircase. This work was, of course, very widely known ; and it had attracted not merely additional attention, but additional respect, to the unique quality of his design and workmanship as a decorator. He had only to accept ordinary commercial conditions and use them for what they were worth, to become a wealthy man, who might live where he chose, and surround himself with a sort of barbed wire fence of beautiful objects. This was just what he would not do : nor would he consent to the less distasteful compromise of giving up the conditions of

active production to settle down in quietness at his beloved Kelmscott. The actual problem of civilization, as it was focussed and concentrated in the welter of London, drew him towards it with an invincible attraction; and upon senses always actually open, and a brain that never ceased sounding among the bases of things, there fell with ever increasing urgency the cry of a bewildered and unhappy people—*confusæ sonus urbis et illætabile murmur*.

## CHAPTER XII

### Merton Abbey

1881

Ever since the days when Red House was to have been made the centre of a little manufacturing community, the idea of transferring the works of the firm to some place out of London had been in Morris's mind; and now not only was his dislike of London greater than ever, but the increasing scale and complexity of the business made migration more practically urgent. The least that was wanted was a single place in which the business could be so far concentrated that he could dye his own silks and cottons and wools, weave his own carpets and tapestries and brocades, print his own chintzes, and put together his own painted windows. When the separate counting house and show-rooms in Oxford Street was set up, there was no insuperable difficulty in the way of transferring the manufacturing part of the business from Queen Square and Hammersmith to any centre that might be fixed upon.

The neighbourhood of London was searched all round. The premises chosen at Merton in Surrey were disused print-works, on the high road from London to Epsom, just seven miles from Charing Cross. The works stood on about seven acres of ground, including a large meadow as well as an orchard

and vegetable green. They were old-fashioned, though still in good repair. One drawback to the place was its extreme inaccessibility, considering the smallness of the distance, from Morris's house at Hammersmith, or indeed from almost any part of London. The District Railway was not then extended either to Wimbledon or to Turnham Green. To reach Merton from Kelmscott House Morris had to go by the underground railway from Hammersmith to Farrington Street, cross the City, and then go down to Merton from Ludgate Hill, a journey that took about two hours. He could, however, stay the night at Merton when there was much to be done. A couple of rooms were fitted up for his private use as at Queen Square: "Papa will have a delightful sort of Quilp establishment there," his daughter wrote when the move was being made.

A circular issued from Oxford Street when the Merton workshops were in complete order gives a full catalogue of all the kinds of work designed and executed there. The list is as follows :

1. Painted glass windows.
2. Arras tapestry woven in the high-warp loom.
3. Carpets.
4. Embroidery.
5. Tiles.
6. Furniture.
7. General house decorations.
8. Printed cotton goods.
9. Paper hangings.
10. Figured woven stuffs.
11. Furniture velvets and cloths.
12. Upholstery.

In the earlier years of the business Morris had accepted commissions for windows in old as well as new buildings. When the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded, he was forced to reconsider the whole question of



dealing with old churches more deeply than before ; and the conclusions he drew with regard to the practice of restoration obliged him to take up a very stringent attitude when there was any question of alterations to an ancient building. He laid down a self-denying ordinance with regard to supplying painted windows for ancient buildings. The result in three cases out of four was simply that the owners or guardians, of the mediæval building went somewhere else ; and the window was filled with glass as much inferior to his in colour and design as it was more alien from the spirit of the Middle Ages, not least so when it was inspired by an insincere and pretentious mediævalism.

By abstaining himself, however, he hoped to set an example that others might gradually follow ; and perhaps his action has not been wholly without effect. In a few instances he allowed exceptions : among these may be mentioned the five beautiful windows executed by him for the chancel of St. Margaret's, Rottingdean, at the special request of Burne-Jones. In that case the windows were plain lancets filled with modern glass, some of it unpainted, the rest admittedly and unrelievedly hideous. There was no tracery to injure, and no existing ancient glass to suffer from the juxtaposition of the new.

The painting of tiles, which had been one of the first occupations of the firm in Red Lion Square, had by this time almost ceased. It had ceased wholly as regards figure-painted tiles, of which a few sets of great beauty, some of them with reverses by Morris also painted on them, had been made for a few years and not in great numbers. Pattern tiles, chiefly meant for use in fireplaces, went on being produced—as they still are—to a limited extent from the early designs. They were all hand-painted, even when the designs were very simple, the touch of the brush being essential towards giving that quality of pattern and surface that made them coherent with the larger decoration of which they formed a part. It may be added that, while the

firm never either designed or made pottery of any kind—the tiles used for painting on being got from outside, chiefly from Holland—they did something towards introducing in England knowledge of some of the best varieties of foreign manufacture, especially the simple and beautiful *Gres de Flandre* ware, now so common in the shops of London furnishers, which made its first appearance in England, except as a curiosity, in Morris's showroom. Neither did the production of furniture play any important part in the firm's business. There were generally a few pieces, nearly all from Webb's designs, being made; but Morris never designed any himself; it was only when some piece, such as a chest or cupboard, was to be further adorned with gilding or painting, that it came into his hands. Of all the specific minor improvements in common household objects due to Morris, the rush-bottomed Sussex chair perhaps takes the first place. It was not his own invention, but was copied, with trifling improvements, from an old chair of village manufacture picked up in Sussex by Mr. Warrington Taylor. With or without modification it has been taken up by all the modern furniture manufacturers, and is in almost universal use. But the Morris pattern of the later type (there were two) still excels all others in simplicity and elegance of proportion.

The beginnings of the important industry of carpet-weaving have already been recounted. Looms had already been built at Hammersmith for weaving carpets of considerable size, as much as twelve feet across. The great loom at the Merton works is built for making a carpet of no less than twenty-five feet in breadth. The designing of these carpets was wholly done by Mr. Morris himself. His practice was first to make a drawing on the scale of about one-eighth of the full size, which he coloured very carefully with his own hand. A draughtsman enlarged this coloured drawing on the "point paper"—paper, that is, divided into minute spaces, each representing a single knot of the carpet. The pointing on this paper, a work of immense laboriousness, was done by

Morris himself until he gradually trained other workmen to do it with the accurate judgement which makes all the difference between the right and wrong expression of the design. The same laborious work was undertaken by him in the designing of silk damasks, woven tapestries and all the patterned woven stuffs produced on his looms.

Beyond the preliminary tasks of designing and pointing, the actual work at the loom performed by Morris remained for some years very great: and it became still greater when he set aside the carpet-loom for the tapestry-loom, upon which he revived the splendid and almost extinct art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The manufacture of Arras tapestry, on which Morris had been experimenting at Hammersmith throughout the year, was only fairly begun after the works were removed to Merton. The first piece made there was a frieze of greenery with birds, which, like the carpet of the previous year, went to Naworth. In reviving this noble art he had nothing in England to guide him, as to the mechanical part of the work, beyond drawings of looms in old books. To see what the mechanism was really like, he had to pay a visit to the Gobelins, where he found the ancient loom still in use, though sunk to the servile task of making copies of oil paintings.

When months of daily practice had familiarized Morris himself with the processes and difficulties of tapestry-weaving, the next thing was to teach the art to other workmen. The work is of a kind which experience proves to be best done by boys. It involves little muscular effort, and is best carried on by small flexible fingers. "At Merton," Mr. Wardle adds, "the boys, who were still young, lived in the house. We gave them board and lodging and a certain weekly stipend. It is worth while to note that there was no sort of selection of these boys, or of any others who were brought up by us to one or other branch of Mr. Morris's business."

This system of setting the nearest person to do whatever kind of work wanted doing was really of the essence of Morris's method as a manufacturer from the beginning ; and in his hands it produced surprisingly good results. How it would have worked, whether indeed it would have worked at all, with a man of less genius at the head of the work as a directing and propelling force, is of course a different question. But, as Morris always insisted, it would have worked just as well, and with much greater certainty, if instead of the solitary man of genius at the head of the work, there had been a living inherited tradition throughout the workshop. The skilled workman is not as a rule a workman who possesses any remarkable innate skill of hand. He is one rather whose general intelligence has protected him against that excessive division of labour which cramps and sterilizes the modern artificer. If a rational latitude were given to manual work of the individual under proper guidance, it might well be that the average skill of hand and eye, stimulated and not repressed by its daily labour, would of its own self rise to a level which at present is only reached in isolated instances. On this point the evidence given by Morris himself in March, 1882, before the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, indicates his view with great clearness and precision. "I often have great difficulty," he said, "in dealing with the workmen I employ in London, because of their *general ignorance*." This general ignorance was just what had to be met by general education, not by specific technical instruction. But drawing, as at the basis of all manual arts whatever, he held to be an essential element in general education which should be worthy of the name. "I think undoubtedly everybody ought to be taught to draw just as much as everybody ought to be taught to read and write."

One secret of the excellence of Morris's own designs was that he never designed anything which he did not know how to produce with his own hands. He had mastered the practical arts of dyeing and weaving before he began to produce designs

for dyed and woven stuffs to be made in his workshops. "It is a thing to be deprecated," he says in his evidence before the Royal Commission, "that there should be a class of mere artists who furnish designs ready-made to what you may call the technical designers. I think it desirable that the artist and what is technically called the designer should practically be one."

Perhaps the most important new development that the business took after it was moved to Merton Abbey was the production of printed cotton goods, the celebrated "Morris chintzes", which soon became more widely known and more largely used than his woven stuffs or wall-papers. Their success was so great that deliberate or unconscious imitations of them soon began to be produced by the manufacturers and find a ready market. Their adaptability to many small purposes gave them an advantage over the paper-hangings and tapestries. To hang a room with good hand-printed paper is a matter of serious expense to many people who would like to do that, but who do not very acutely realize the difference between it and a machine-printed paper that can be produced for one-sixth and bought for one-third of the price. But a mere scrap of these bright and beautiful patterned chintzes can be used to light up a room, as a curtain, or the cover of a chair, or a cushion, or in twenty other ways; and perhaps the primary use for which these fabrics were meant, that of wall-hangings, is the one to which they have been most seldom applied. Paper-hangings are so much taken for granted as the covering of the walls of rich and poor houses alike, that people rarely pause to consider their many disadvantages. The simpler patterns of his chintzes Morris was able to produce at a price little higher than that of moderately costly wall-papers; their decorative effect in a room is perhaps tenfold that of the papers and yet his appeal to use them for the purpose for which they were meant fell on the public in vain. People dressed themselves in his wall-hangings, covered books

with them, did this or that with them according to their fancy ; but hang walls with them they would not.

“ Of the work at Merton,” Mr. Wardle says, looking back on it perhaps through something of that enchantment that is lent by distance, “ there seems nothing to say except that it was altogether delightful.” It went on in the ordered tranquillity of spacious and even beautiful surroundings. There were pure water, light, and air in abundance ; and the change from the cramped quarters and grimy atmosphere of Bloomsbury reacted on the master’s own temper. “ It is noticeable,” says Mr. Wardle, “ in remembering his nervous temperament, that at Merton, he showed no irritation on arriving. There remained a certain impetus in his manner, as if he would still go at twenty miles an hour and rather expected everything to keep pace with him.” It was not in his workshops alone that he seemed to expect this, nor was it in his workshops that the expectation was oftenest disappointed.

But indeed even to the present day, as one turns out of the dusty high road and passes through the manager’s little house, the world seems left in a moment behind. The old-fashioned garden is gay with irises and daffodils in spring, with hollyhocks and sunflowers in autumn, and full, summer by summer, of the fragrant flowering shrubs that make a London suburb into a brief June Paradise. It rambles away towards the mill pond with its fringe of tall poplars ; the cottons lie bleaching on grass thickly set with buttercups ; the low long buildings with the clear rushing little stream running between them, and the wooden outside staircase leading to their upper story, have nothing about them to suggest the modern factory ; even upon the great sunk dye-vats the sun flickers through leaves, and trout leap outside the windows of the long cheerful room where the carpet-looms are built.

Nor did it prove to be the case that these humanized conditions, these pleasant surroundings of the work carried on at Merton Abbey, were in any way fatal to the success of the

business as a matter of ordinary commerce. It was not from any disastrous experience of his own that Morris was led to despair of the existing order of things.

This market for excellence he conquered himself, partly by the mere force of his genius, and partly by real business ability. He approached matters of business in so peculiar a spirit, that the question whether he was really a good business man or not was often debated, and is still debatable. Some of the qualities which go to make up that character he undoubtedly possessed in a high measure: above all perhaps, a certain indefinable driving power—a quality as rare as it is valuable—which was quite distinct from his own energy or industry, and which hardly ever failed to affect those with whom he came into personal contact. In his immediate subordinates—Mr. George Wardle first, and the Messrs. Smith afterwards—he was fortunate in finding men who caught this energy from him and yet retained with it a full measure of shrewdness and caution.

But for the ordinary process of competitive commerce, and this as much before as after he adopted any distinctively Socialistic views, his qualities, whether intellectual or emotional, were not such as are calculated to lead to conspicuous success. The truth is that commercial success is an art which must be seriously pursued and which he, quite apart from any question of morality, was at once too imaginative, too soft-hearted, and too much engrossed by wholly different interests, to pursue seriously. He carried on his business as a manufacturer not because he wished to make money, but because he wished to make the things he manufactured. The art of commerce as it consists in buying material and labour cheaply, and forcing the largest possible sale of the product, was one for which he had little aptitude and less liking. In every manual art which he touched, he was a skilled expert: in the art of money-making he remained to the last an amateur. Throughout he regarded material with the eye of the artist, and labour with the eye of a fellow-labourer. He never grudged or haggled

over the price of anything which he thought really excellent of its kind and really desirable for him to have ; he would dye with a kermes instead of cochineal if he could gain an almost imperceptible richness of tone by doing so ; he would condemn piece after piece of his manufacture that did not satisfy his own severe judgement. And in his relations to his workmen he had adopted the principle of the living wage, and even of profit-sharing, before he began to discharge a workman even for habitual negligence or, in some cases which could be quoted, for actual dishonesty. Of the feelings of his social inferiors—or indeed of his social equals—he was sometimes strangely inconsiderate ; but towards their weaknesses he was habitually indulgent. For what lay at the root of his belief was that this life, the life which he had himself deliberately chosen, should be, and might be, accessible to all. He recognised no essential difference between an artist and a workman. Until a state of society were realized in which artists should be workmen, and workmen artists, no really sound, and living, permanent art could exist. And the hire of the workmen in any really civilized community should be precisely, neither more nor less, what he claimed as his own due, and what he was satisfied with as his own recompense : “ Money enough to keep him from fear of want or degradation for him and his ; leisure enough from bread-earning work (even though it be pleasant to him) to give him time to read and think, and connect his own life with the life of the great world ; work enough of the kind aforesaid and praise of it, and encouragement enough to make him feel good friends with his fellows ; and lastly (not least, for 'tis verily part of the bargain) his own due share of art, the chief part of which will be a dwelling that does not lack the beauty which Nature would freely allow it, if our own perversity did not turn nature out of doors.”

In this last clause of his definition of the ideal life, not for isolated individuals, nor for a cultured class, but for universal,



mankind, he returns to his perpetual insistence on the value of architecture, in its widest sense, as the beginning and end of all the arts of life. To him, the man lived in the house almost as the soul lives in the body. The degradation of architecture and of its subservient arts of decoration was at once the cause and effect of the whole degradation of human life.

But how to begin? His own work as a decorator led him to see that in the furnishing of the house, such as it was, a practical beginning, however slight, might be made by every one. Hence he was led to the formulation of his celebrated rule—a rule that, as he said without boasting, will fit everybody; “Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.” There is no more brilliant example of a rule that is at once completely universal in its scope, and completely certain in its application.

Closely connected with this doctrine was his second cardinal axiom: “No work which cannot be done with pleasure in the doing is worth doing.” That “natural aptitude for his work so strong that no education can force him away from his special bent” was a quality in him which he could not believe to be unique or even peculiar. “I tried to think what would happen to me,” he says in another lecture, that entitled ‘The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization,’ “if I were forbidden my ordinary daily work; and I knew that I should die of despair and weariness. It was clear to me that I worked not in the least in the world for the sake of earning leisure by it, but partly driven by the fear of starvation or disgrace, and partly, and even a very great deal, because I love the work itself.” As he accounted labour without pleasure inhuman, so he claimed as the labourer’s right an amount of spontaneity in his work that was far removed from the actual conditions of common labour. What he could least bear, he used to say, if he were a workman, was the uninterrupted work required of them during working hours, and he was sorry for men who had to do it. While he was working himself it was always notice-

able how he would break off every now and then to get up and look out of the window, or walk up and down the room, and yet his actual output would be faster and more continuous than that of any workman who never stirred from his bench or took his hand off his machine. His horror of pleasureless labour made him keenly sympathetic with the working man even in his least lovely phases. "If I were to work ten hours a day at work I despised and hated, I should spend my leisure, I hope in political agitation, but I fear in drinking." Thus it was that, before and after the adoption of his final creed Morris carried on his work patiently from day to day, and thus it was that he exhorted others by word and example to carry on theirs; "not living like fools and fine gentlemen, and not beaten by the muddle, but like good fellows trying by some dim candle-light to set our workshop ready against tomorrow's daylight." Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

## CHAPTER XIII

### **Concentration : The Democratic Federation**

1882-1884

Of the year between the establishment of the works at Merton Abbey and the return of Morris to active political life as a member of the Socialist party at the beginning of 1883, it so happens that there are unusually few records. Perhaps their scarcity is not altogether accidental. He was working out new theories of life; he was doing this very much alone; and he had less leisure than usual, and perhaps less inclination than leisure for correspondence, or for holiday-making, or for anything beyond work and thought. "I feel a lonely kind of a chap," he says himself, half humorously and half self-pityingly. Early in the year he had gone down with his elder daughter to the little house at Tottingdean which Burne-Jones had bought

the year before. From there he wrote to Mrs. Burne-Jones on the 10th of January :

“ I have perhaps rather more than enough of work to do, and for that reason or what not, am dwelling somewhat low down in the valley of humiliation—quite good enough for me doubtless. Yet it sometimes seems to me as if my lot was a strange one ; you see, I work pretty hard, and on the whole very cheerfully, not altogether I hope for mere pudding, still less for praise ; and while I work I have the cause always in mind, and yet I know that the cause for which I specially work is doomed to fail, at least in seeming ; I mean that art must go under, where or how ever it may come up again. I don't know if I explain what I am driving at, but it does sometimes seem to me a strange thing indeed that a man should be driven to work with energy and even with pleasure and enthusiasm at work which he knows will serve no end but amusing himself ; am I doing nothing but make-believe then, something like Louis XVI's lock-making ? There, I don't pretend to say that the conundrum is a very interesting one, as it certainly has not any practical importance as far as I am concerned, since I shall without doubt go on with my work, useful or useless till I demit.

“ Well, one thing I long for which will certainly come, the sunshine and the spring. Meantime we are hard at work gardening here : making dry paths, and a sublimely tidy box edging : how I do love tidiness ! ”

Work at Merton went on pleasantly and successfully. “ I have just twice as much to do since we began at Merton,” he writes in June. “ At the same time I think it likely enough that my carpet business may fail commercially. I shan't like that ; but as to giving up the whole affair because of it, if I say so it is mere ill-temper on my part, always supposing we can struggle on somehow.” But his daughter's severe and repeated illnesses during the summer and autumn upset the whole year for him. It is not putting the case too strongly to

say that for the time they thoroughly shattered his nerve, though the private correspondence in which this appears is neither meant nor suited for a wider public. This household anxiety coloured all the world to him: and even Kelmscott that year could not charm away his melancholy. The sense of change seemed brooding everywhere, and a dim shadow of unhappiness clung about the "sweet-looking clean waterside."

With the exception of two lectures given on behalf of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Iceland Famine Relief Fund was the only public matter in which Morris took any part during the year. In the depths of his own household anxiety this work came as a kind of relief; and during August and September he was busy over it, writing letters to the newspapers and making personal appeals to all his acquaintance. "For those," he wrote to the Times on the 5th August, "who have never been in Iceland nor read its ancient literature there still remains the undoubted fact that they are a kindly, honest, and intelligent people, bearing their lot, at the best a hard one, with singular courage and cheerfulness, and keeping up through all difficulties in their remote desert (for such indeed is the land in spite of its beauty and romance) an elevation of mind and a high degree of culture, which would be honourable to countries much more favoured by nature." But the work could not distract him long from his own thoughts. "I have had a bad time of it lately and feel ten years older than I did in June," he writes again six weeks later. "I saw to-day about a book written by an Italian peasant (near Verona) complaining of their misery. How shocking it seemed to me that all the riches of rich lands should be wasted till they are no better than the poorest for most men. Think what the constitution of civilized society must be when the Italian peasant is not better off, but worse off (taking one year with another), than his brother of Iceland!"

Apart from all private anxieties, the pressure on Morris's mind during these autumn and winter months seems from

several indications to have been greater than it was either before or since. It is a curious sign of this loneliness and self-absorption at this time, that no two of his friends (so far as I am able to ascertain) agree in their view of the steps by which he became a convinced Socialist and the main influences—whether men or events or books—that served to shape his course at this time precisely in the way it took. His own letters of the time, so far as they exist, give little clue to any changes which were going on in his mind. The account which he himself gave some ten years later is no doubt abstractly accurate. “A brief period of political Radicalism,” he then wrote, “during which I saw my ideal clear enough, but had no hope of any realization of it, came to an end some months before I joined the Democratic Federation, and the meaning of my joining that body was, that I had conceived a hope of the realization of that ideal.” But for the growth of this hope no one cause can be assigned. He once said to Mr. G. B. Shaw that he had been converted to Socialism by Mill, in his posthumously published papers analyzing the system of Fourier, in which he “clearly gave the verdict against the evidence.” For some considerable time after he became a professed Socialist, he worked hard at the task of proving his belief. “I put some conscience into trying to learn the economical side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the economics of that work.” But the belief while it was not unreasoned, was not the outcome (if any belief be) of abstract economic reasoning.

While it is true to say that during these months Morris was moving towards Socialism, it would also be true to say that Socialism was moving towards him.

In 1881 an effort had been set on foot to organize the various Radical clubs of working men in different parts of London, and to give the organization a definite bias in favour of what were becoming known as Socialistic principles. The result was the formation of a body known as the Democratic

Federation. Its programme was, broadly speaking, that of the political Radicalism of the time, and directed towards alterations in the mere machinery of government—annual Parliaments, payment of Members, abolition of the House of Lords, and the like. The only distinctively “ Socialist ” article in its creed was a claim, not further defined, for the nationalization of land.

A passage in a lecture delivered at the beginning of 1884 seems to express his attitude precisely in the way that he felt and meant it. “ The cause of art,” he there says, “ is the cause of the people. We well-to-do people, those of us who love art, not as a toy, but as a thing necessary to the life of man, have for our best work the raising of the standard of life among the people. How can we of the middle classes, we the capitalists and our hangers-on, help ? By renouncing our class, and on all occasions when antagonism rises up between the classes, casting in our lot with the victims ; those who are condemned at the best to lack of education, refinement, leisure, pleasure and renown ; and at the worst, to a life lower than that of the most brutal of savages. There is no other way.”

On the 13th of January 1883, Morris was unanimously elected an Honorary Fellow of his college at Oxford. On the 17th of the same month, he enrolled himself as a member of the Democratic Federation. On his card of membership, which is signed by H. H. Champion, he is described as “ William Morris, designer.” It was on his status as a workman that he based his claim to admission into the fighting rank of a working-class movement. The step, which in a sense cut him definitely away from respectability, was in no way a merely formal one. He took it with a full sense of its import. “ I am truly glad,” were his words with something of the grave joy of a convert, “ that I have joined the only society I could find which is definitely Socialistic.” His support of the new movement, even before he formally joined it, had not been confined to theoretical sympathy. In the previous October he had sold

the greater part of his valuable library, in order to devote the proceeds to the furtherance of Socialism.

More's "Utopia" had been one of the books he had read aloud at Kelmscott during his melancholy autumn holiday, and it had no inconsiderable influence over him; much more, it seems, than the professedly Socialistic treatises—Marx's "Capital," Wallace's "Land Nationalization," and the like—which he had been rather dispiritedly ploughing through. Socialists more versed in abstract economic theories than himself were inclined to accuse him of sentimentalism; and in this, as in other spheres of activity, the demands of the romantic imagination were as imperious in him as ever.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Democratic Federation

1883-1884

For the two years during which Morris was a member of the Democratic Federation, there is little in his life to chronicle which is not directly connected with that organization, and with his own development under its influence into a more logical and uncompromising type of Socialist. For reasons which are easy to appreciate, and of which his own statement will be given later, he did not, either when he joined it as an active member or afterwards, abandon his own profession as manufacturer, or his own status as a man of letters. But it took up a principal, and, as time went on, an absorbing share of his time, thought, and energy. His production in pure literature, whether prose or verse, fell for these years wholly into abeyance: his production as designer was greatly curtailed; and his management of his business became more and more perfunctory. Fears were often expressed by his friends that the effect on the business might be grave, if not disastrous.

But it had been solidly founded, and was kept up by the skill and energy of his managers, Mr. George Wardle, and Messrs. F. & R. Smith who were now practically partners as well. Morris himself was nearly always ready to respond to the call for new designs that were really needed and to apply his strong common sense to questions that were submitted for his decision.

An interesting light is thrown on his attitude of mind at this time by a letter written in January to Mr. Manson, his old colleague on the executive of the National Liberal League.

"I can't say," he writes, "how it was that Rossetti<sup>1</sup> took no interest in politics ; but so it was : of course he was quite Italian in his general turn of thought ; though I think he took less interest in Italian Politics than in English, in spite of his knowing several of the leading patriots personally, Saffi for instance." The difference here touched, whether or not the explanation offered of it be right, was real and deep. Morris had himself always been one of the people to whom personal matters bear far less than their normal share in life. He was interested in things much more than in people. He had the capacity for loyal friendships and for deep affections ; but even of these one might almost say that they did not penetrate to the central part of him. The thing done, the story, or the building, or the picture, or whatever it might be, was what he cared about in the work of his contemporaries and friends no less than in that of other ages or countries : and in his mind these things seem to have been quite independent of the storyteller, or the architect, or the painter, and not merely substantive things, but one might always say substantive personalities. So too in the ordinary concerns of life he was strangely incurious of individuals. On one side this quality of mind took the form of an absolute indifference to gossip and scandal, and a capacity of working with the most unsympathetic or disagreeable colleagues, so long as they were helping on the particular

<sup>1</sup> Rossetti had died in the previous April.



work in hand. On another side it resulted in an almost equally marked inconsiderateness. He sometimes seemed to have the aloofness of some great natural force. For sympathy in distress, for soothing in trouble, it was not to him that one would have gone. The lot of the poor, as a class, when he thought of it, had always lain heavily on his spirit. But the sufferings of individuals often only moved him to a certain impatience. Many years before, Rossetti, in one of those flashes of hard insight that made him so terrible a friend, had said of him, "Did you ever notice that Top never 'gives a penny to a beggar?'"

Of Morris's first appearance at a meeting of the Democratic Federation the following account is given by Mr. Scheu :

"In the early winter months of 1883 the Democratic Federation had arranged some meetings at the Westminster Palace Chambers. I attended the first of those meetings (I forget the exact date), Mr. Hyndman in the chair. The order of the day was the passing of some resolutions on the question of education, normal working-day, and the housing of the working classes. The business had scarcely started when Banner, who sat behind me, passed me a slip of paper, 'The third man to your right is William Morris.' I had read of but never seen Morris before, and I looked at once in the direction given. I was struck by Morris's fine face, his earnestness, the half searching, half dreamy look of his eyes, and his plain and comely dress."

At the same meeting "Rowland, for whom we voted for our School Board," Morris writes, "was there, and spoke hugely to my liking; advocated street-preaching of our doctrines as the real practical method: wisely to my mind, since those who suffer (more than we or they can tell) from society as it is, are so many, and those who have conceived any hope that it may be changed are so few." This belief, to which he clung against hope for several years, had momentous consequences in his life; for in the task of street-preaching outdoors, and work equivalent to street-preaching indoors, he broke down in his

health, and to some extent wore away the keen edge of his mind. But for the moment the new task seemed to lend him additional vigour.

About the same time Morris wrote to Mr. T. C. Horsfall, who had made his acquaintance four years earlier in connexion with the formation of the Manchester Art Museum :

" I think on reflection that I have not much to add to what I have written in my little book " (" Hopes and Fears for Art "). " I have, as you will note, guarded myself against the imputation of wishing to get rid of all rough work. I would only get rid as much as possible of all nasty and stupid work, and what is left I would divide as equitably as might be among all classes.

" You see it was not necessary in my lectures to tell people that I am in principle a Socialist, and would be so in practice if there should ever in my lifetime turn up an occasion for action : add to this fact that I have a religious hatred to all war and violence, and you have the reason for my speaking and writing on subjects of art. I mean that I have done it as seed for the goodwill and justice that *may* make it possible for the next great revolution, which will be a social one, to work itself out without violence being an essential part of it."

But economy of truth was never a thing possible for Morris, and any advance in his own views was reflected immediately in his public as much as in his private utterances. On the 6th of March he gave an address on " Art, Wealth, and Riches " at the Manchester Royal Institution, in which the Socialist doctrine was so pronounced as to meet with much hostile criticism. On the theory of art people were willing to hear him gladly, much as they would hear a preacher from the pulpit on the theory of religion. They would even to some degree consent to translate his doctrine into practice in the decoration of their houses. But when he attacked the structure and basis of the life they led in these houses, there were murmurs of alarm

You see I think we differ to start with in this, that you think that the present system of Society has certain hitches in it; certain wrongs resulting from blunders persisted in, till they have become very difficult to deal with, but which hitches and blunders are removable, and when removed will leave us a society which can be kept straight by careful attention to the general duties of good citizenship. I confess I go much further than that; true it is that I cannot help trying to remove obvious anomalies or helping what I can to palliate the effects of the obstinate blunders which we both see, but I do so with little hope, because I believe that the whole basis of Society, with its contrasts of rich and poor is incurably vicious: I might be content that the change which I think must come about before this can be righted should be a gradual one—or say I *must* be content; but I do not see that those who are at the head of the political advance have any intention of making a real change in the social basis: for them it seems a part of the necessary and eternal order of things that the present supply and demand Capitalist system should last for ever; though the system of citizen and chattel slave under which the ancient civilizations lived, which no doubt once seemed also necessary and eternal, had to give place, after a long period of violence and anarchy, to the feudal system of seigneur and serf; which in its turn, though once thought necessary and eternal, has been swept away in favour of our present contract system between rich and poor. Of course I don't do you the injustice to suppose that you defend the finality of any system, but I am quite clear that the ordinary Radical of to-day does do so, and there I join issue with him.

“Also of course, I do not believe in the world being saved by any system,—I only assert the necessity of attacking systems grown corrupt, and no longer leading any whither: that to my mind is the case with the present system of capital and labour: as all my lectures assert, I have personally been gradually driven to the conclusion that art has been handcuffed

by it, and will die out of civilization if the system lasts. That of itself does to me carry with it the condemnation of the whole system, and I admit has been the thing which has drawn my attention to the subject in general : but furthermore in looking into matters social and political I have but one rule that in thinking of the condition of any body of men I should ask myself, ' How could you bear it yourself? What would you feel if you were poor against the system under which you live? ' I have always been uneasy when I had to ask myself that question, and of late years I have had to ask it so often, that I have seldom had it out of my mind : and the answer to it has more and more made me ashamed of my own position, and more and more made me feel that if I had not been born rich or well-to-do I should have found my position *un*-endurable and should have been a mere rebel against what would have seemed to me a system of robbery and injustice. Nothing can argue me out of this feeling, which I say plainly is a matter of religion to me : the contrasts of rich and poor are unendurable and ought not to be endured by either rich or poor."

In more touching and intimate words he wrote on the 21st of August to Mrs. Burne-Jones, who had made a renewed effort to urge him back to writing poetry :

" I am touched by your kind anxiety about my poetry.  
 \*            \*            \* Poetry goes with the hand-arts I think,  
 and like them has now become unreal : the arts have got to die,  
 what is left of them before they can be born again. You know  
 my views on the matter: I apply them to myself as well as to  
 others. This would not, I admit, prevent my writing poetry  
 any more than it prevents my doing my pattern work, because  
 the mere personal pleasure of it urges one to the work ; but  
 it prevents my looking at it as a sacred duty. Meantime the  
 propaganda gives me work to do, which, unimportant as it  
 seems, is part of a great whole which cannot be lost, and that  
 ought to be enough for me."

Within the ranks of the Democratic Federation meanwhile, which had set out so gaily to conquer working-class opinion and use it as a lever against the established order of things, disruptive tendencies were already showing themselves, and its middle-class leaders were already beginning to mistrust one another. "I am like enough to have some trouble over my propagandist work," Morris writes at the end of August, "let alone that I am in for a many lectures: for small as our body is, we are not without dissensions in it. Some of the more ardent disciples look upon Hyndman as too opportunist, and there is truth in that; he is sanguine of speedy change happening somehow, and is inclined to intrigue and the making of a party; towards which end compromise is needed, and the carrying people who don't really agree with us as far as they will go. As you know, I am not sanguine, and think the aim of Socialists should be the founding of a religion, towards which end compromise is no use, and we only want to have those with us who will be with us to the end. In the midst of all this I find myself drifting into the disgraceful position of a moderator and patcher up, which is much against my inclination.

"Meantime it is obvious that the support to be looked for for constructive Socialism from the working classes at present is nought. Who can wonder, as things now are, when the lower classes are really lower? Of vague discontent and a spirit of revenge for the degradation in which they are kept there is plenty I think, but that seems all. What we want is real leaders themselves working men, and content to be so till classes are abolished. But you see when a man has gifts for that kind of thing he finds himself tending to rise out of his class before he has begun to think of class politics as a matter of principle, and too often he is just simply 'got at' by the governing classes, not formally, but by circumstances I mean. Education is the word doubtless; but then in comes the commercial system and defends itself against that in a terrible unconscious way with the struggle for bread, and lack of leisure

and squalid housing—and there we go, round and round the circle still.”

It was not only the business of moderating and patching up that was now beginning, but the equally endless task of explaining to a quite light-hearted and careless world distinctions which perpetually became more crucial as their scope was narrowed, but which those beyond the circle could never be induced to see as distinctions at all. “The manifesto spoken of in to-day’s Daily News,” he wearily writes, “is not ours; nor is it Social Democratic, which is what we are, but Anarchist. We consider them dangerous; for you see they have no programme but destruction, whereas we are reconstructive. People in general are quite ignorant of the whole matter.”

At the beginning of September he wrote the first of those hymns of the new movement which were issued under the title of “Chants for Socialists.” The fine and stirring verses, entitled, “The Day is Coming,” are included in the volume of “Poems by the way.” In sending a copy of the newly-written poem to Mrs. Burne-Jones he once more recurs to the objection, urged by her and by many of those whose sympathy he sought to enlist, that education was the primary necessity, and that it was hopeless to attempt to reconstruct society with the existing materials.

The manifesto of the Democratic Federation, issued in June and signed by Morris together with the rest of the Executive Committee, had gone far in advance of anything that was in his mind, or in the minds of most of his colleagues, when he had joined it at the beginning of the year. He wrote to Mr. Horsfall in reply to a letter of anxious and amazed questioning:

“In a few words what I have to say about the manifesto is, that, though I may not like the taste of some of the wording, I do agree with the substance of it (or) I should not have signed it. This does not however prevent me from agreeing with you that the rich do not act as they do in the matter from malice.

squabblers." But he was heartily annoyed and, to say the truth, frightened at the prominence into which he found himself being pushed by his faction.

What brought the quarrel to a point was a jealousy so trivial that it can hardly now move anything beyond a faint smile. A small knot of Socialists in Edinburgh (the same to which two further recruits were added by Morris's visit and address that autumn) had been organized into a society by Mr. Scheu, whose business had taken him there during the summer. To give it a more imposing air, and also to conciliate the national susceptibility, it was not made a branch of the English Democratic Federation, but was started as a separate organization under the name of the Scottish Land and Labour League. The fat was in the fire at once. Mr. Hyndman called for the instant dissolution of the newly-founded league in the name of the Federation One and Indivisible. Hyndman was denounced as a tyrant; Scheu was denounced in turn as certainly a foreigner, and probably a traitor in the pay of the police. Accusations were flung back and forward of underhand intrigue, of deliberately wrecking the work of colleagues, of being bribed by capitalist gold. The extreme men on both sides gave the impression that, if it had been possible, they would cheerfully have sent their opponents to the guillotine. Things were finally fought out at a full meeting of the Council of the Federation held in London at Christmas. The details and the result may be given in Morris's own words:

"My merry Christmas"—this is written on Christmas Eve—"is likely to be enlivened by a scene or two at all events. \* \* \* \* \* Saturday I *will* be out of it. Our lot agreed beforehand, being I must say moved by me, that it is not worth fighting for the name of the S. D. F. and the sad remains of 'Justice' at the expense of a month or two of wrangling: so as Hyndman considers the S. D. F. his property, let him take it and make what he can of it, and try if he can really make up a bogie of it to frighten the Government, which I really think is

about all his scheme ; and we will begin again quite clean-handed to try the more humdrum method of quiet propaganda, and start a new paper of our own. The worst of the new body, as far as I am concerned, is that for the present at least I have to be editor of the paper, which I by no means bargained for but it seems nobody else will do."

On the 28th he writes :

" Saturday evening did see the end. We began at 6 and ended at 10-30. We voted and the result was as expected, ten to eight, majority of two on our side. Whereon I got up and after a word or two of defence of my honour, honesty, and all that, which had been somewhat torn ragged in the debate, I read our resignation from the paper prepared thereto, and we solemnly walked out. This seemed to produce what penny-aliners call 'a revulsion of feeling', and most of the other side came round me and assured me that they had the best opinion of me and didn't mean all those hard things ; poor little Williams cried heartily and took a most affectionate farewell of us. Of course we did right to resign ; the alternative would have been a general meeting, and after a month's squabble for the amusement of the rest of the world that cared to notice us, would have landed us first in deadlock and ultimately where we are now, two separate bodies. This morning I hired very humble quarters for the Socialist League, and authorised the purchase of the due amount of Windsor chairs and a kitchen table : so there I am really once more like a young bear with all my troubles before me. We meet to inaugurate the League tomorrow evening. There now, I really don't think I have strength to say anything more about the matter just now. I find my room here and a view of the winter garden, with the men spreading some pieces of chintz on the bleaching ground, somewhat of a consolation. But I promise myself to work as hard as I can in the new body, which I think will be but a small one for some time to come."



## CHAPTER XV

### The Socialist League

1885-1886

"I cannot yet forgo the hope," Morris had written in July, 1884, when the disruption of the Democratic Federation was already looming ahead, "of our forming a Socialist *party* which shall begin to act in our own time, instead of a mere theoretical association in a private room with no hope but that of gradually permeating cultivated people with our aspirations." After the first spasm of disheartened disgust at the break-up of December was over, he was not disinclined to set to work again to form such a party out of what he believed was a thoroughly loyal remnant. To this task he now set himself in fresh courage and with even higher hope. The conflict had made him examine his own ground more carefully; he was more satisfied than ever of the truth of his principles, and of the reasonableness of his position. But the prominence now forced upon him as a leader at once exposed him to a redoubled storm of misrepresentation and obloquy. Socialism had once been regarded by ordinary middle-class opinion as a thing that went on abroad. When there was no longer any doubt that it had reached England, it was still looked on for a time as a silly or perhaps even an interesting craze. But now it had roused a genuine fear among a large body of people.

On Morris personally the attack was a double one. It consisted on the one hand in renewing, with additional zest and less attention to ordinary manners, the familiar sneers at the strange figure of a poet-upholsterer; and on the other, of denouncing him for inconsistency or hypocrisy in being a Socialist who was also a capitalist manufacturer. In his first public utterance after the formation of the Socialist League, he had expressed his hope and his aim in words of studied

moderation. He spoke of the social re-organization which he advocated as something not only desirable in itself, but involving a high conception of duty, and containing in it the elements of solid permanence. "When the change comes, it will embrace the whole of society, and there will be no discontented class left to form the elements of a fresh revolution. It is necessary that the movement should not be ignorant, but intelligent. What I should like to have now, far more than any thing else, would be a body of able, high-minded, competent men who should act as instructors. I should look to those men to preach what Socialism really is—not a change for the sake of change, but a change involving the very noblest ideal of human life and duty ; a life in which every human being should find unrestricted scope for his best powers and faculties." His critics invoked the laws of nature to sustain the conclusion that a state of things in which the larger number of the human race were permanently poor, ignorant, and brutal was certainly necessary and in all probability desirable.

The inconsistency of Morris's own position as a capitalist employer of labour was a matter on which he might more reasonably be challenged by a criticism which was not either purposely unfair or obviously unintelligent. To an attack made by an anonymous correspondent in the *Standard*, Morris had then replied in simple and dignified words, which come near the truth of the matter, though, as Morris himself felt, they require further definition.

"I think, I may assume," he then wrote, "that your correspondent had no wish to cast any personal imputation on my motives, but wished to call attention to the position of those, who, like myself, are well-to-do employers of labour (as I am) and hold Socialist views.

"Your correspondent implies that, to be consistent, we should at once cast aside our position of capitalists, and take rank with the proletariat ; but he must excuse my saying that he knows very well that we are not able to do so ; that the

most we can do is to palliate, as far as we can, the evils of the unjust system which we are forced to sustain ; that we are but minute links in the immense chain of the terrible organization of competitive commerce, and that only the complete unriveting of that chain will really free us. It is this very sense of the helplessness of our individual efforts which arms us against our own class, which compels us to take an active part in agitation which, if it be successful, will deprive us of our capitalist position."

What is quite certain is that the reproach of inconsistency was never made against Morris by any of his own workmen. The attacks on this score which he had to meet came in the main from educated people, who attached their own meaning to the term Socialism, and were confident in their condemnation of doctrines the purport of which they had never taken pains to ascertain. The fixed idea which most of them had was that Socialism meant the redistribution of individual property in equal shares. From this point, however, they pursued divergent lines of argument. Some contented themselves with remarking that if individual property were divided equally to-day, inequality would have begun to reinstate itself before tomorrow. Others argued that any employer who believed in the principles of socialism could carry them out in practice by sharing the profits of his business equally among himself and each of his workmen. But among the latter class of objectors were some for whose good opinion Morris had a respect ; and it was implicitly in answer to them that he drew up, in June, 1884, a memorandum going into the matter, not only on the principle, but in detailed figures.

The business was then organized as follows. Morris himself, George Wardle his chief manager, and four other sub-managers or heads of departments, shared directly in the profits of the business. Two others, the colour-mixer and the foreman dyer, shared in them also, but indirectly in the form of a bonus on the goods turned out. The rest of the staff

were paid fixed wages ; the greater number (including all the most efficient workmen) by the piece ; a smaller residuum, partly consisting of men who were getting past work on the one hand, or on the other as yet imperfectly trained, by the hour. Both piece-workers and time-workers were paid on a scale somewhat over the ordinary market price of their labour. "Two or three people about the place," he adds, "are of no use to the business and are kept on on the live-and-let-live principle."

The choice which lies before a capitalist, or before the hanger-on of the capitalist class known by the name of a professional man, whom reflection has turned into a convinced Socialist, is this. Shall he ease his conscience by dropping a certain portion of the surplus value which reaches him, in order to bestow it in charity on a handful of workers (for it is but charity after all, since their claim is not on him personally, but on the class and system of which he is a mere unit) ? Or shall he, continuing his life under existing conditions, do his best, by expenditure of his money and his whole powers, to further a revolution of the basis of society? If he can do both, let him do so, and make his conscience surer. But if, as must generally be the case, he must choose between suffering some pangs of conscience and divesting himself of his power to further a great principle, "then, I think," Morris concludes, "he is right to choose the first."

This, then, was the conclusion to which Morris came as to what was right for him to do with his income as a Capitalist. To distribute it among his own workmen would be to waste it ; he could as little satisfy his conscience by wasting as by hoarding ; his duty was to spend it ; to devote it, as he devoted all else that belonged to him, to the furtherance of one great purpose.

How it could be so spent was sufficiently plain. The newly-founded Socialist League was practically without funds except so far as he supplied them. That it should spread its

doctrines by means of a newspaper was taken for granted from the first, and preparations for bringing out the *Commonweal*, the first number of which appeared at the beginning of February, were begun the first moment that the League was constituted. "I intend," he wrote on the 4th of January, "to turn it into a weekly if possible : but paying for 'Justice' has somewhat crippled me, and I shall have to find money for the other expenses of the League first."

The beginnings of the venture were not discouraging. "They have sold 5,000 and are in a second edition," Morris writes on the 10th of February ; "I have written a poem for the next number, not bad I think." This poem, "The Message of the March Wind," which appeared in the March number, has touches in it of the natural magic which had filled his early poetry. It opened a series of poems, forming a more or less continuous narrative, which, under the title of "The Pilgrims of Hope," appeared at irregular intervals in the *Commonweal*. With all its faults this series of poems is perhaps the only contribution to the first issue of the *Commonweal* which appeals to a wide circle or has any permanent value as literature. It contains passages of extreme beauty : the two sections reprinted in "Poems by the Way" under the names of "Mother and Son" and "The Half of Life Gone" stand high among his finest work.

On the 27th of May he writes again, giving in a few touches a vivid picture of what the little meetings, over which he was spending so much time and energy, were really like.

"On Sunday I went a-preaching Stepney way. My visit intensely depressed me, as these Eastward visits always do : the mere stretch of houses, the vast mass of utter shabbiness and uneventfulness, sits upon one like a nightmare : of course what slums there are one doesn't see. You would perhaps have smiled at my congregation ; some twenty people in a little room, as dirty as convenient and stinking a good deal. It took the fire out of my fine periods, I can tell you : it

is a great drawback that I can't *talk* to them roughly and unaffectedly. Also I would like to know what amount of real feeling underlies their bombastic revolutionary talk when they get to that. I don't seem to have got at them yet—you see this great class gulf lies between us."

The numbers of the League grew only very slowly. In July, when stock was taken of the progress made, they only amounted to a little over two hundred all told, over all the branches in both England and Scotland. But they were working on hard in the hope of an ampler harvest from some sudden movement of popular feeling. In June they had taken new premises in Farrington Road, which included a printing office and a large lecture room. The output of leaflets and pamphlets, as well as their monthly journal, was carried on to the utmost limit of their means; and it had been determined to turn the *Commonweal* into a weekly paper as soon as sufficient guarantee could be procured against the further loss of money on it that was then certainly to be expected. Morris himself, beyond his other work for the League, had set on foot a branch at Hammersmith, to whose use he gave up the large room where he had begun his carpet-weaving. Sunday evening addresses were regularly given there by himself or others of his colleagues; and as regularly on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings he spoke at outdoor meetings in different parts of London. At these, as a rule, knots of working men and casual passers-by listened with a languid interest. But in September the action taken by the heads of the Metropolitan Police with regard to an open-air meeting in Limehouse raised the Socialist movement into increased notoriety, and gave it the greatest access of popular support that it had yet found.

A space in that part of London, at the corner of Dod Street and Burdett Road, had long been in common use for public gathering and open-air speaking on all kinds of subjects, especially on Sundays, when there was practically no traffic. The Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League had

both held meetings there repeatedly. Of late there had been some friction with the police, and notice had been given that the meetings must be stopped. The joyful expectation of a disturbance drew a crowd estimated at about a thousand people to the place that Sunday. Against this crowd, which was quite determined not to be dispersed so long as there was the chance of seeing any fun, the dozen or so of police who had been drafted to the spot found themselves almost helpless. Several ineffective attempts had been made to get at the group of speakers who were on a drag in the middle of the concourse, and the police, jeered at and hustled by an unsympathetic crowd, began to lose their tempers. Meanwhile one o'clock struck: and the signal of the opening of the public houses caused the greater part of the crowd to disperse. Hot, weary, and angry, and not wishing to think that all their unpleasant morning's work had effected nothing, the policemen charged among the remnants, knocked down two banners, and marched eight men off to the nearest police station, where they were charged with obstructing a public thoroughfare and resisting the police in the execution of their duty.

When the prisoners were brought up at the Thames Police Court next morning, there was the usual amount of confused and contradictory evidence given as to the amount of obstruction that had really happened, and the degree of violence used by or against the police. Finally Mr. Saunders, the sitting magistrate, sentenced one of them to two months' hard labour and imposed fines all round on the rest. What is known as a scene in court followed; there were loud hisses and cries of "Shame!" In these Morris, who was in court with other members of the League, joined: there was some hustling before order was restored, and he was arrested and charged on the spot with disorderly conduct and striking a policeman. To this charge he gave a direct negative. No evidence was called on either side, but the following curious dialogue ensued:

Mr. Saunders: What are you?

Prisoner : I am an artist, and a literary man, pretty well known, I think, throughout Europe.

Mr. Saunders : I suppose you did not intend to do this ?

Prisoner : I never struck him at all.

Mr. Saunders : Well, I will let you go.

Prisoner : But I have not done anything.

Mr. Saunders : Well, you can stay if you like.

Prisoner : I don't want to stay.

He was accordingly discharged, and left the court. It was the one instance in which he was stung into asserting his own reputation in public, and the incautious words were long remembered against him. But the whole proceedings were a substantial victory for him and his party. The right of free speech is of all the privileges of citizenship the one which the ordinary Englishman guards most jealously : and interference with that right, when it seems to encroach on customary limits, is fiercely resented by the most orderly classes. More especially is this so in London, where the police are under the direct control of the Imperial Executive, and where any suspicion that they have been used by the party in power to suppress hostile criticism is enough to shake the strongest Government. The London Radicals rallied to the defence of a threatened privilege, and letters of protest poured into the newspapers from opponents as well as friends of Socialism. Many people who took no interest in politics at all were indignant : "Already," one of them wrote to the Daily News, "police interference has caused more obstruction and disturbance than twelve months of Socialistic lecturing." A weak Conservative Government was then in office : a General Election was imminent : and angry charges were made that this attack on a Socialist meeting was an insidious attempt to prepare the way for interference with open-air Parliamentary meeting. The Socialist League rose with a bound to something like popularity. The following Sunday a procession of many thousands of



people, organized by the East London United Radical Club held a meeting on the forbidden spot (the few policemen present, under fresh instructions, not attempting to interfere,) and then dispersed in a quiet orderly way, good-tempered with victory. "All goes well," Morris wrote: "we Socialists have suddenly become popular, and your humble servant could hardly have received more sympathy if he had been racked by Mr. Saunders. All this has its absurd, and even humiliating side, but it is encouraging to see that people are shocked at unfairness and persecution of mere opinion, as I really think they are."

Unfortunately for the prospects of the League, the ground thus gained was soon lost by the old trouble of ill-assorted colleagues and internal jealousies. Morris himself, who had been working and travelling much beyond his strength, was laid up immediately afterwards for a month or six weeks with the severest attack of gout he had yet had, and in his absence the others fell to quarrelling with one another. On the 31st October, while still completely crippled by his illness, he wrote to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"Here I am still more or less on my back, though I am getting better; I have not had any very bad pain, but have been so dead lame that till yesterday it has been a month of wheeling me in on a sofa from my room to the dining-room. I think I was much like this at Venice, only not so lame. There, enough of symptoms. It has been beautiful weather here till to-day, and I am glad of that for your holidays' sake; also I have enjoyed it myself: it was quite a luxury to lie here in the morning and let the sun creep over me and watch the clouds. I am afraid that when I get about again I shall find myself very lazy; I have picked up terrible habits of novel-reading and doing nothing this spell. I don't think it comes from my knocking about to meetings and the like, but rather from in-caution as to diet, which I really must look after. You see, having joined a movement, I must do what I can while I last,

that is a matter of duty. Besides, in spite of all the self-denying ordinances of us semi-anarchists, I grieve to have to say that some sort of leadership is required, and that in our section I unfortunately supply that want; it seems I was missed last Monday, and stupid quarrels about nothing took place, which it was thought I could have stopped. All this work I have pulled upon my own head, and though in detail much of it is repulsive to the last degree, I still hold that I did not do so without due consideration. Anyhow, it seems to me that I can be of use, therefore I am impelled to make myself useful.

"It is true, as I think I have said before, that I have no great confidence in the stability of our party: but in the stability of the movement I have every confidence; and this I have always said to myself, that on the morrow of the League breaking up I and some half dozen must directly begin a new organization; and I believe we should do so.

"You see, my dear, I can't help it. The ideas which have taken hold of me will not let me rest: nor can I see anything else worth thinking of. How can it be otherwise, when to me society, which to many seems an orderly arrangement for allowing decent people to get through their lives creditably and with some pleasure, seems mere cannibalism; nay worse, (for there might be hope in that,) is grown so corrupt, so steeped in hypocrisy and lies, that one turns from one stratum of it to another with hopeless loathing. One must turn to hope, and only in one direction do I see it—on the road to Revolution; everything else is gone now. And now at last when the corruption of society seems complete, there is arising a definite conception of the new order, with its demands in some sort formulated. In the details of that I do not myself feel any great confidence, but that they have taken so much form is hopeful, because unless the new is near to the birth, however rotten the old may be, rebellion against it is mere hopeless grumbling and railing, such as you used to reproach me with.

“ Meantime what a little ruffles me is this, that if I do a little fail in my duty some of my friends will praise me for failing instead of blaming me. I have a pile of worry about the party ahead of me when I am about again, which must excuse me for dwelling on these things so much.

“ They made it up last night. Even such things as this don’t shake me : means one must use the best one can get ; but one thing I won’t do, wait for ever till perfect means are made for very imperfect me to work with. As to my not looking round, why it seems to me that no hour of the day passes that the whole world does not show itself to me.”

Such was the courage with which Morris met apparent failure. He was soon to be more seriously alarmed by a sudden though elusive prospect of premature success. It was borne in on him by bitter daily experience how unripe the Socialist party was ; how discordant in its aims, how unfixed in its principles, how incapable of forming or guiding any large popular movement. On the 8th of February, 1886, a meeting of the London unemployed in Trafalgar Square had been followed by a riot which caused an immense sensation, and to the imagination of many persons seemed the beginning of a really revolutionary movement. When the meeting was over, a mob made its way through several of the main streets of the West End of London, hurling stones at the windows of club-houses, stopping carriages and demanding money from the occupants, and breaking into and plundering several shops, less it would seem from any distinct plan of robbery than as a rough practical joke. Morris’s own shop, or at the least its windows, only escaped destruction by a few minutes : the shutters were put up and the door locked just as the crowd began to pour into Oxford Street out of North Audley Street. But by that time they had become a mere rabble, and were easily dispersed by the police “ Contemptible as the riot was, as a riot,” Morris wrote of it, “ it no doubt has had a great effect, both here and on the Continent.” Nothing of the sort had happened in

London for many years. Parliament had just met and a change of Ministry was in progress. The rumours of Mr. Gladstone's proposed Irish legislation had raised politics to a high tension, and there was all abroad a general uneasiness and excitement which needed little to inflame it. To the Socialists, at least to the more thoughtful among them, excitement was mingled with a sort of terror. They had been working for a Revolution, hitherto with little belief that anything could be effected for a long time to come. Was the revolution, beyond their expectation and almost beyond their hope, already at the door? In the next number of the *Commonweal*, Morris took the opportunity to issue a weighty statement of policy.

"I should like to say a few words with the utmost seriousness to our comrades and supporters, on the policy of the Socialist League. I have said that we have been overtaken unprepared, by a revolutionary incident, but that incident was practically aimless. This kind of thing is what many of us have dreaded from the first, and we may be sure that it will happen again and again while the industrial outlook is what it is; but every time it happens it will happen with ever-increasing tragedy. It is above all things our business to guard against the possible consequences of these surprises. At the risk of being misunderstood by hot-heads, I say that our business is more than ever *Education*.

"The Gospel of Discontent is in a fair way towards forcing itself on the whole of the workers; how can that discontent be used so as to bring about the New Birth of Society? That is the question we must always have before us. It is too much to hope that the *whole* working class can be educated in the aims of Socialism in due time, before other surprises take place. But we must hope that a strong party can be so educated, educated in economics, in organization and in administration. To such a body of men all the aspirations and vague opinions of the oppressed multitudes would drift, and little by little they would be educated by them, if the march of the events should

give us time ; or if not, even half-educated they would follow them in any action which it was necessary to take.

“ Let me ask our comrades to picture to themselves the consequences of an aimless revolt unexpectedly successful for the time; we will even suppose that it carries with it a small number of men capable of government and administration, though that is supposing a great deal. What would be the result unless the people had some definite aim, however limited?

“ The men thus floated to the surface would be powerless, their attempts at legislation would be misunderstood, disappointment and fresh discontent would follow and the counter-revolution would sweep them away at once. But, indeed, it would not even come to that. History teaches us that no revolts that are without aim are successful even for a time ; even the failures (some of them glorious indeed) had a guiding aim in them, which only lacked completeness.

“ The educational process therefore, the forming a rallying point for definite aims, is necessary to our success ; but I must guard against misunderstanding. We must be no mere debating club, or philosophical society ; we must take part in all really popular movements when we can make our own views on them unmistakably clear ; that is a most important part of the education in organization.

“ Education towards Revolution seems to me to express in three words what our policy should be ; towards that New Birth of Society which we know must come, and which, therefore, we must strive to help forward so that it may come with as little confusion and suffering as may be.”

In issuing this manifesto Morris, while not taking any step that brought him nearer the other wing of the Socialist party, the Parliamentarians and opportunists with whom he had broken a year before, also cut himself definitely away from the more violent section of his own supporters, who were already beginning to class themselves as Anarchists. It became a

question whether the midway course he had chosen would attract towards it the best men of both extremes, or whether, on the other hand, he and his following would find themselves a mere thinning remnant between two divergent and increasing camps.

## CHAPTER XVI

### **The Odyssey : John Ball : Trafalgar Square : The Arts and Crafts : Return to Romance**

1886-1889

The translation of the Odyssey had been begun in February, but made little progress till summer, when he took to it with keen interest and advanced with it rapidly. "The Odyssey is to my mind much the most interesting of the two," he had written to Ellis when he first took up the translation, "but I may do the Iliad afterwards. It is hard work, much more so than the Virgil, owing to the great simplicity of the original, which never has a redundant word in it, or a word without a meaning : however it is very pleasant work." As it went on, its soothing effect over his nerves became more and more marked. At the beginning of September he alludes to its progress in a letter promising a visit to W. Bell Scott in his northern home at Penkill :

"I am also at work, as perhaps you have heard, at translating the Odyssey : this is very amusing : and a great rest from the other work : I am in the middle of the 9th book now."

Already literature both in prose and verse was filling up his mind. At the end of October he was full of new projects. The first half of the Odyssey was nearly completed. And he had begun to write the flower of his prose romances, the work into which he put his most exquisite descriptions and his deepest thoughts on human life, "The Dream of John Ball." It also was first published in the Commonweal, beginning in the

number for the 13th of November 1886, and concluding in that for the 22nd of January, 1887.

"I have just finished the 16th book of the *Odyssey*," he writes to his daughter on the 18th of February, "and am getting the first volume through the press." The first volume was published early in April, and the second volume followed in November. It was received with the respect due to its merits. The first edition was sold out in six weeks: but it never became really popular, nor has it taken a place as the standard English version of Homer.

Morris prided himself upon the fidelity of his version to the original: "My translation is a real one so far," he wrote of it to Ellis while it was in progress, "not a mere periphrase of the original as *all* the others are." There is a measure of truth in what he said of the translation himself before it appeared: "I don't think the public will take to it; it is too like Homer." In fact, one may well wonder that in a language which is so different from Greek, and which with all its own merits, has so little of the specific Greek beauty, Morris succeeded in producing such radiant effects as he does. And if his translation has not become the standard English version, it is only because that place still remains empty.

All through that hot summer of the Queen's Jubilee he stayed in London, busily trying to keep the Socialist League together, and working hard at Merton against the continued depression of trade, but not too anxious to enjoy life in a way that he could hardly have done the year before. A few extracts from letters written during the summer months may be added here.

"I am trying to get the League to make peace with each other, and hold together for another year. It is a tough job; something like the worst kind of pig-driving I should think, and sometimes I lose my temper over it. It is so bewilderingly irritating to see perfectly honest men, very enthusiastic, and

not at all self-seeking and less stupid than most people, squabble so : and withal for the most part they are personally good friends together.

" I had three very good days at Kemlscott " (in September) : " once or twice I had that delightful quickening of perception by which every thing gets emphasized and brightened, and the commonest landscape looks lovely ; anxieties and worries, though remembered, yet no weight on one's spirits—Heaven in short. It comes not very commonly even in one's younger and brighter days, and doesn't quite leave one even in the times of combat."

Late in that autumn was produced the most singular of all Morris's literary adventures, the little play entitled " The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened." " I have been writing," he says on the 24th of September, " a—What ?—an ' interlude ' let's call it, to be acted at Farringdon Road for the benefit of Commonweal." It was performed there on the 15th of October, Morris himself acting in it, and was so successful that it was repeated three times.

A long continued depression of trade had made the question of the unemployed, in London and elsewhere, more than usually serious ; and the restlessness among the working class culminated in the famous scenes of the 13th of November, " Bloody Sunday " in and round Trafalgar Square. A meeting in the Square had been announced to protest against the Irish policy of the Government : it had been proclaimed by the police, and became converted into a demonstration on a huge scale. No one who saw it will ever forget the strange and indeed terrible sight of that grey winter day, the vast sombre-coloured crowd, the brief but fierce struggle at the corner of the Strand, and the river of steel and scarlet that moved slowly through the dusky swaying masses when two squadrons of the Life Guards were summoned up from Whitehall. Morris himself did not see it till all was nearly over. He had marched with one of the columns which were to converge on Trafalgar Square from all



quarters. It started in good order to the number of five or six thousand from Clerkenwell Green, but at the crossing of Shaftesbury Avenue was attacked in front and on both flanks by a strong force of police. They charged into it with great violence, striking right and left indiscriminately. In a few minutes it was helplessly broken up. Only disorganized fragments straggled into the Square to find that the other columns had also been headed off or crushed, and that the day was practically over. Preparations had been made to repel something little short of a popular insurrection. An immense police force had been concentrated, and in the afternoon, the Square was lined by a battalion of Foot Guards, with fixed bayonets and twenty rounds of ball cartridge. For an hour or two the danger was imminent of street-fighting such as had not been known in London for more than a century. But the organized force at the disposal of the civil authorities proved sufficient to check the insurgent columns and finally clear the streets without a shot being fired. For some weeks afterwards the Square was garrisoned by special drafts of police. Otherwise London next day had resumed its usual aspect.

Once more the London Socialists had drawn into line with the great mass of the London Radicals, and a formidable popular movement had resulted, which on that Sunday was within a very little of culminating in a frightful loss of life and the practical establishment of a state of siege in London. But the English spirit of compromise soon made itself felt. While on the one hand the impotence of a London crowd against armed and drilled forces had been crushingly demonstrated, on the other hand the public were startled into seriousness. Measures were taken for the relief of the unemployed. Political Radicalism resumed its normal occupations; and by the end of the year the Socialist League had dropped back to its old place, a small body of enthusiasts among whom an Anarchist group were now beginning to assume a distinct prominence. The only other important public occasion in which Morris took

part during the rest of the year was on the 18th of December. A young man named Alfred Linnell had died in hospital from injuries received from the police in the struggle of Bloody Sunday. A public funeral was organized. In pouring rain a great but orderly crowd marched through the mid-winter dusk from Soho to Bow Cemetery, where the burial service was read by the light of a lantern. The stately verses which Morris wrote for the occasion are well known. Less known, but perhaps not less worthy of remembrance, is the brief speech which he delivered over the grave. His words, spoken to a crowd fast melting away in the darkness and rain, tried to recall the larger and nobler issue. "Our friend who lies here has had a hard life, and met with a hard death; and if society had been differently constituted, his life might have been a delightful, a beautiful, and a happy one. It is our business to begin to organize for the purpose of seeing that such things shall not happen; to try and make this earth a beautiful and happy place."

"The scene at the grave," he writes a few days afterwards, "was the strangest sight I have ever seen, I think. It was most impressive to witness; there was to me something awful (I can use no other word) in such a tremendous mass of people, unorganized, unhelped, and so harmless and good-tempered."

This feeling of pity for the helplessness of the masses had throughout stood alongside of his indignation at the practical barbarism of the commercial system as the dominant force in his mind. When he saw the multitudes—if we may recall in so different a context the august words of the Evangelist—he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. The direct result of all his efforts to bring them together and lead them was indeed little enough. The smallness of the numbers of really convinced supporters, however much the opportunist section of English Socialists might try to swell them out by

various bodies of men in buckram, was a fact to which he never blinded himself, nor was he less keenly alive to the prodigious difficulty of accustoming men's minds in England to conceive the possibility of any changes being effected by other than the familiar Parliamentary methods. "I have always known," he writes on the 26th of February, 1887, to Ellis, "that if ever there were a Socialist *party* in England they would have to send men to Parliament, though I certainly wouldn't be one of them. But 'tis no more use a *sect* blustering about getting itself 'represented' than it is about its conquering the world by dynamite and battle. 'Tis barely possible to get a Radical returned as a Radical, let alone a Socialist. Still things have moved much within the last four years, and they will no more stop for the capitalists than they will hurry for me." But it was all waste of labour. "Men fight and lose the battle," says John Ball, "and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out to be not what they meant." The silent permeation of a new spirit was making itself felt. The doctrines on which Socialism is founded were slowly beginning to modify common thought. Education towards revolution, Morris's own watchword as a Socialist, was in one sense or another rapidly becoming the order of the day. In the larger sphere of politics a change of tone was beginning to be manifest. Significant utterances began to be heard from supporters of the existing organization. The celebrated words, "We are all Socialists now," had already been uttered by an ex-Minister in the House of Commons. Professed Socialists had been invited to read papers at the Church Congress, and a Bishop had startled his colleagues by publicly declaring the contrast between the rich and poor to be so appalling that serious consideration was due to any scheme, no matter how revolutionary, that promised relief. And about Morris himself a group of artists and craftsmen were gathering, who, without following his principles to their logical issues or joining any Socialist organi-

zation, were profoundly permeated with his ideas on their most fruitful side, that of the regeneration, by continued and combined individual effort, of the decaying arts of life. Among these men, a small body, but growing in numbers, strong in youth, ardent in assured conviction, Morris's final words on the Beauty of Life were at last working with their full force. "To us who have a cause at heart, our highest ambition and our simplest duty are one and the same thing. For the most part we shall be too busy doing the work that lies ready to our hands to let impatience for visibly great progress vex us much. And surely, since we are servants of a cause, hope must be ever with us."

This group of craftsmen were drawn together from many different quarters and worked in very various methods ; but each in his own sphere, all alike consciously aimed at a Renaissance of the decorative arts which should act at once through and towards more humanized conditions of life both for the workman and for those for whom he worked. There were few if any among them who would not readily have acknowledged Morris as their Master. The seed sown twenty-seven years before in the little workshop in Red Lion Square had long been silently and unostentatiously bearing fruit. Of those whose practice had long been moulded by Morris's influence, there were not a few for whom the ideas which underlay the whole of his work had, when they took definite shape as a body of doctrine, added a quickened impulse and a higher enthusiasm. Socialism, less as a definite creed or a dogmatic system than as a way of looking at human life and the meaning of the arts, was widely diffused among a younger generation of artists. Among these Mr. Walter Crane, by his versatility and energy, as well as the acknowledged excellence of his artistic work, held a leading place. Mr. T. J. Cobden-Sanderson brought to the movement an energy as great, united with the gift of a copious and persuasive eloquence. Among the younger men Mr. Heywood Sumner, Mr. W. R. Lethaby, and Mr. W. A. S. Benson.

may be singled out as prominent members of the group. Only a few out of the whole body were, either then or subsequently professed Socialists. Some of them were Conservative or even ultra-Conservative in politics. But they all in their special lines of work carried out ideas of which Morris was the original source. To them, and to many others, he has been, both while he lived and afterwards, an inspiring and guiding influence of the first importance.

The sense of corporate life among this group of artists and workmen had by this time reached a point where it demanded some visible expression. There was already a sort of freemasonry among them. The Art Workers' Guild, established in March, 1884, had become a great influence towards solidarity. But now an increased motive power might, it was thought, be given to the movement by arranging for periodical public exhibitions of work done. These exhibitions were to be combined with some amount of instruction by acknowledged masters in both the theory and the practice of the various handicrafts.

The first step towards carrying the scheme now once more suggested into actual working was taken by Mr. Benson, who, since he left Oxford in 1876, had been engaged first (like Morris himself) in an architect's office, and then in founding and carrying on a business as a decorative metal-worker and cabinet-maker, and had been throughout that time intimate with Morris on the side of theory and of practice alike. In concert with two or three others, he succeeded, early in 1886, in effecting the formation of a provisional committee of some five and twenty members. Nearly all of them were also members of the Art Workers' Guild; and it was the existence of the Art Workers' Guild, Mr. Benson thinks, which made the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society possible.

Towards the movement which thus took shape, the way here, as in so many other instances, had been pointed out by the far-ranging genius of Ruskin long before any steps were,

or could be, taken towards its realization. The prophet had, as usual, been long before his age. The whole of the Socialism with which Morris identified himself so prominently in the eighties had been implicitly contained, and the greater part of it explicitly stated, in the pages of "Unto This Last" in 1862, when Morris had just begun the work of his life as a manufacturer. And so now, the new movement in art, which had had so powerful an effect in the succeeding decade, took a direction which had been suggested by Ruskin ten years earlier. Writing to Morris on the 3rd of December, 1878, Ruskin, after thanking him for being the only person who went "straight to the accurate point of the craftsmen's questions" added these striking words: "How much good might be done by the establishment of an exhibition, anywhere, in which the Right doing, instead of the Clever doing, of all that men know how to do, should be the test of acceptance!" The times were not then ripe. But now this was the one main object with which the Arts and Crafts Society was founded, and this was the test which, to the best of its power and will, it attempted to apply.

The project had taken form in the latter months of 1887. Morris, though for it, as for the whole movement out of which it sprang, he was so largely the ultimate source, had no share in its origination, and was at first, with his strong common sense, inclined to lay stress on the difficulties that stood in the way.

But the scheme was already fairly afoot: and Morris seems to have underestimated, not indeed the actual progress that had been made in the production of good work rightly done, but the amount of feeling towards such production which was stirring, and the amount of public interest which had been at last, though languidly and tardily, aroused in the difference between good and bad decorative art. When once the decision was taken, he gave the scheme his hearty support: and in this, as in the succeeding exhibitions held, his work attracted a wider and more intelligent interest than could have been

counted upon. The lectures and papers which he contributed had also a real stimulative and educative value. Limited as was the number of people interested in the subject, they were to be counted by hundreds where those interested in theoretic Socialism could be reckoned on the fingers on one hand. When he resumed educational work in connexion with what was, after all, his own proper subject, on which he spoke with the ease and authority of an absolute master, he may indeed have felt that he was not striking at the root, but must also have recognized that he was not spending his blows on the air.

“The Dream of John Ball” was published as a book that month, and was followed two months later by the volume of lectures and addresses entitled “Signs of Change.” This volume once cleared out of the way, his mind reverted with full force to the romance and simplicity of a remoter past. An epoch of swift change, even were it in the nature of progress, was distasteful to his temperament. He was continually seeking refuge from it in dreams of some settled and seeming-changeless order, whether seen as a vision of the future or recreated from a tradition of the past. The old world which he had summoned up in “John Ball” was one that had none of this stability. Its period was that of the breaking up of the mediæval system, and the beginnings of times of change, destruction and unsettlement. In the new romance which he had now begun to write, he went back from the close of the Middle Ages to their earliest beginnings, and from a complex artificial Society to the simplest of all known to history. This story “The House of the Wolfings,” was the first of a series of prose romances which he went on writing almost continuously down to the end of his life.

Apart from other reasons this book has a special interest as marking the beginning of Morris’s practical dealings with the art of typography. Hitherto he had been content to let his books be printed in the common way, without any special attention to matters of type or arrangement of page. His

attention had been lately turned to the matter through an increasing intimacy with his neighbour at Hammersmith Mr. Emery Walker, whose enthusiasm for fine printing was accompanied by a thorough practical acquaintance with it as a modern handicraft. The story itself well deserved the words "your delightful and wonderful book", with which it was hailed by Mr. Swinburne. For the first time since "The Earthly Paradise" had been completed, Morris was writing with complete enjoyment and perfect ease. The life of the Germanic tribes of Central Europe in the second or third century was one which was at once sufficiently known to allow copious and detailed description and sufficiently undetermined to give full scope to a romantic imagination. The use as the vehicle of the story, of a mixed mode of prose and verse, was a device not perhaps suited for frequent repetition, but excellently adapted for this particular purpose. It was suggested by the Icelandic Sagas, but used in a fresh and quite delightful way. By the use of prose for the main narrative, he avoided the languor which is almost inseparable from verse as a medium of continuous narration, and in speeches and ornate passages, where prose in its turn would flag, the rolling verse—that of "Sigurd the Volsung" revived in much of its first freshness—seems the natural medium of the heightened emotion.

Like "The Roots of the Mountains," it belongs to what may be called the epic or Icelandic side of the author's imagination. In the later prose tales he reverted to a softer and sweeter world, that of a vaguely mediæval life, with churches in it and houses of monks, and a faint air of the thirteenth century, the world of his own earlier masterpiece in the story of "The Man Born to be King." This primitive Gothic world of older gods and more heroic men was less fully his own. In "The Roots of the Mountains," though the supposed date of the story can hardly be later than the seventh century, he tends to slip back now and then into the later romantic world, full of beautifully forged armour and grey carved stone, and gar-



dens standing thick with pinks and lavender. But here all the sensuous ornament of mediæval romance is as strictly excluded as it is from the stories of Sigurd and of the dwellers in Laxdale. Even when the hero makes pictures for himself of some golden life that is to be when fighting is over, it is no such world of cloistered green places, "faint with the scent of the overworn roses and the honey-sweetness of the lilies," to which his dreams turn, but the hard open life of the earlier world.

His first satisfaction in the appearance of the book was soon replaced by a keener desire to improve upon it. "I am very glad that you like the new book," he writes to Ellis a few days after it was published. "I quite agree with you about the type; they have managed to knock the guts out of it somehow. Also I am beginning to learn something about the art of type-setting; and I now see what a lot of difference there is between the work of the conceited numskulls of to-day and that of the 15th and 16th century printers merely in the arrangement of the words, I mean the spacing out: it makes all the difference in the beauty of a page of print. If ever I print another book I shall enter into the conflict on this side also. However this is all grief that comes of fresh knowledge and I am pretty well pleased with the book as to its personal appearance."

"The Roots of the Mountains" had been begun as soon as "The House of the Wolfings" was through the press. "Did I tell you in my last," he writes to his daughter on the 29th of January, "that I had begun a new tale? I don't know whether it will come to anything, but I have written about twenty pages in the rough. This time I don't think I shall 'drop into poetry,' at least not systematically. For one thing the condition of the people I am telling of is later than that of the Wolfings. They are people living in a place near the Great Mountains. I don't think it is worth while telling you anything more of it till you hear some of it done, as the telling the plot of a story in cold blood falls very flat."

"The Roots of the Mountains" was published in the middle of November. The study of typography as a fine art, which had been begun in "The House of the Wolfings," was here carried out much more fully, and the result was a page of great beauty. "I am so pleased with my book," Morris said soon after it was published, "—typography, binding, and must I say it, literary matter—that I am any day to be seen hugging it up, and am become a spectacle to Gods and men because of it." As to the "literary matter," he said afterwards that this of all his books was the one which had given him the greatest pleasure in writing. For combination and balance of his qualities it may perhaps be ranked first among his prose romances. It has not the strength of its predecessor, "The House of the Wolfings," nor the fairy charm of its successor, "The Wood beyond the World." But in its union of the gravity of the Saga with the delicate and profuse ornament of the romance it may perhaps take the first place among the three as a work of art.

The binding which pleased him so much was one of his own chintzes, used for a small number of copies of the books printed on hand-made paper. His own cooler judgement recognized that it had defects for this use both in pattern and texture, and the experiment was not repeated. But his interest in the production of printed books was now fully aroused on all its sides; and he was already beginning to plan out the printing and production of such books himself.

"I think before my next book comes out," he wrote to Ellis on the 21st of November, "I shall design a chintz for bookbinding, and if I do I shall get it calendered so as to keep the dirt off—what do you think? As to the printing, the difficulty of getting it really well done shows us the old story again. It seems it is no easy matter to get good hand-press men, so little work is done by the hand-press: that accounts for some defects in the book, caused by want of care in distributing the ink. I really am thinking of turning printer myself in a small

way ; the first step to that would be getting a new fount cut. Walker and I both think Jenson's the best model, taking all things into consideration. What do you think again ? Did you ever have his Pliny ? I have a vivid recollection of the vellum copy at the Bodleian."

Such was the first inception of the Kelmscott Press. In December Mr. Emery Walker was asked by Morris to go into partnership with him as a printer. He was unable to accept the offer but the starting of a printing press was nevertheless definitely resolved on, and the latest interest of Morris's life begins from this point.

## CHAPTER XVII

### **Passive Socialism : Foundation of the Kelmscott Press**

1890-1891

While Morris's attention was becoming absorbed in other fields, the affairs of the Socialist League had been going on from bad to worse. Such part of their doctrines as was of essential truth or immediate practical value had been absorbed by, and was bearing fruit among, the larger body of persons who were interested in social theories, but more concerned about what was immediately possible than in dreams, however high or however bloodthirsty. The real battle-ground had been transferred to the Independent Labour Party, and, in the metropolis, the recently created London County Council. To these bodies a number of the best members of the League now transferred their energies. The remnant became more and more a group of impracticable visionaries whom the movement of things had left behind. In 1889 the control of the executive was captured by a group of professed Anarchists. One of their first acts was to depose Morris from the control of the

Commonweal, replacing him by an extremist named Frank Kitz. "The League," says one of its members, "became a romping ground of more than dubious characters"—he gives names which I forbear to quote—"who, being suspected of relations with the police, drove the better elements away in disgust, and finally broke up what was left of Morris's organization." With infinite patience, Morris continued for some time yet to bear the demands made on his purse to meet the expenses of the Commonweal; and it was after his removal from the editorship that he contributed to it, from the 11th of January to the 4th of October, 1890, the successive chapters of his romance, "News from Nowhere." In the issues of July and August there was also printed in numbers a lecture by him on the Development of Modern Society. On the 12th of May he reappeared on the stage in support of the fast sinking funds of the journal, taking a part in a one-act play, "The Duchess of Bayswater & Co.," which was performed by members of the League in a hall in Tottenham Court Road. This was one of the last desperate efforts made to restore the League to solvency.

Morris had learned his lesson. "Such finish to what of education in practical Socialism I am capable of," he wrote a few years later with a touch of acid humour, "I received from some of my Anarchist friends, from whom I learned, quite against their intention, that Anarchism was impossible, much as I had learned from Mill, against his intention, that Socialism was necessary." But before severing his connexion with the League, Morris made a final statement and appeal. It appeared in the Commonweal for the 15th of November, 1890, and summed up his attitude towards the cause which he had, in spite of all disillusionments, as deeply as ever at heart. He reviews the strange history of the movement with calmness and not without a certain pride.

"It is now some seven years," he writes, "since Socialism came to life again in this country. To some the time will seem

long, so many hopes and disappointments as have been crowded into them. Yet in the history of a serious movement seven years is a short time enough ; and few movements surely have made so much progress during this short time in one way or another as Socialism has done.

“ For what was it which we set out to accomplish ? To change the system of society on which the tremendous fabric of civilization is founded, and which has been built up by centuries of conflict with older and dying systems, and crowned by the victory of modern civilization over the material surroundings of life. Could seven years make any visible impression on such a tremendous undertaking as this ?

“ Consider, too, the quality of those who began and carried on this business of reversing the basis of modern society ! A few working men, less successful even in the wretched life of labour than their fellows ; a sprinkling of the intellectual proletariat, whose keen pushing of Socialism must have seemed pretty certain to extinguish their limited chances of prosperity ; one or two outsiders in the game political ; a few refugees from the bureaucratic tyranny of foreign Governments ; and here and there an unpractical, half-cracked artist or author.

“ Yet such as they were, they were enough to do something. Through them, though not by them, the seven years of the new movement toward freedom have, contrary to all that might have been expected, impressed the idea of Socialism deeply on the epoch.

“ It cannot be said that great unexpected talent for administration and conduct of affairs has been developed amongst us, nor any vast amount of foresight either. We have between us made about as many mistakes as any other party in a similar space of time. Quarrels more than enough we have had ; and sometimes also weak assent for fear of quarrels to what we did not agree with. There has been self-seeking

amongst us, and vain-glory, and sloth, and rashness ; though there has been at least courage and devotion also. When I first joined the movement I hoped that some working-man leader, or rather leaders, would turn up, who would push aside all middle-class help, and become great historical figures. I might still hope for that, if it seemed likely to happen, for indeed I long for it enough ; but to speak plainly it does not seem so at present. Yet, I repeat, in spite of all drawbacks the impression has been made, and why ? The reason has been given in words said before, but which I must needs say again : because that seemingly inexpugnable fabric of modern society is verging towards its fall ; it has done its work, and is going to change into something else.

“ So much at least we have to encourage us. But are not some of us disappointed in spite of the change of the way in which Socialism is looked on generally ? It is but natural that we should be. When we first began to work together, there was little said about anything save the great ideals of Socialism ; and so far off did we seem from the realization of these, that we could hardly think of any means for their realization, save great dramatic events which would make our lives tragic indeed, but would take us out of the sordidness of the so-called ‘ peace ’ of civilization. With the great extension of Socialism, this also is changed. Our very success has dimmed the great ideals that first led us on ; for the hope of the partial and, so to say, vulgarized realization of Socialism is now pressing on us. I think that we are all confident that Socialism will be realized : it is not wonderful, then, that we should long to see—to feel—its realization in our own lifetime. Methods of realization, therefore, are now before our eyes than ideals : but it is of no use talking about methods which are not, in part at least, immediately feasible, and it is of the nature of such partial methods to be sordid and discouraging, though they *may* be necessary.

“ There are two tendencies in this matter of methods : on the one hand is our old acquaintance palliation, elevated now into vastly greater importance than it used to have, because of the growing discontent, and the obvious advance of Socialism ; on the other is the method of partial, necessarily futile, inconsequent revolt, or riot rather, against the authorities, who are our absolute masters, and can easily put it down.

“ With both of these methods I disagree ; and that the more because the palliatives have to be clamoured for, and the riots carried out, by men who do not know what Socialism is, and have no idea what their next step is to be, if contrary to all calculation they should happen to be successful. Therefore, at the best our masters would be our masters still, because there would be nothing to take their place. *We are not ready for such a change as that !*

“ I have mentioned the two lines on which what I should call the methods of impatience profess to work. Before I write a few words on the only line of method on which some of us *can* work, I will give my view about the present state of the movement as briefly as I can.

“ The whole set opinion amongst those more or less touched by Socialism, who are not definite Socialists, is towards the New Traders’ Unionism and palliation. Men believe that they can wrest from the capitalists some portion of their privileged profits, and the masters, to judge by the recent threats of combination on their side, believe also that this can be done. That it could only very partially be done, and that the men could not rest there if it were done, we Socialists know very well ; but others do not.

“ I neither believe in State Socialism as desirable in itself nor, indeed, as a complete scheme do I think it possible. Nevertheless, some approach to it is sure to be tried, and to my mind this will precede any complete enlightenment on the

new order of things. The success of Mr. Bellamy's Utopian book, deadly dull as it is, is a straw to show which way the wind blows. The general attention paid to our clever friends, the Fabian lecturers and pamphleteers, is not altogether due to their literary ability; people have really got their heads turned more or less in their direction.

"Now it seems to me that at such a time, when people are not only discontented, but have really conceived a hope of bettering the condition of labour, while at the same time the means towards their end are doubtful; or, rather, when they take the very beginning of the means as an end in itself,—that this time when people are excited about Socialism, and when many who know nothing about it think themselves Socialists, is the time of all others to put forward the simple principles of Socialism regardless of the policy of the passing hour.

"My readers will understand that in saying this I am speaking for those who are complete Socialists—or let us call them Communists. I say for us *to make Socialists* is *the* business at present, and at present I do not think we can have any other useful business. Those who are not really Socialists—who are Trades' Unionists, disturbance-breeders, or what not—will do what they are impelled to do, and we cannot help it. At the worst there will be some good in what they do; but we need not and cannot heartily work with them, and when we know that their methods are beside the right way.

"Our business, I repeat, is the making of Socialists, *i.e.*, convincing people that Socialism is good for them and is possible. When we have enough people of that way of thinking, *they* will find out what action is necessary for putting their principles in practice. Therefore, I say, make Socialists. We Socialists can do nothing else that is useful."

This grave and reasoned statement drew forth a volley of shrill protest and abuse from the Anarchists of the League.



"Our Comrade lectures us!" one of them writes indignantly in the next number of the journal; and another replies by a frantic appeal to use dynamite and make open war upon society. But Morris had already left the League. The moment he did so it began to crumble away like sand.

While Morris's withdrawal in November 1890, from the membership of the Socialist League by no means meant that he had ceased to be a convinced Socialist or had in any important way modified his doctrine, it did imply an important change in the conduct of his own life. The weary work of militant Socialism was now over for him. To make Socialists, mainly by the quiet influence of ideas; to keep the flame alive till the slow advance of time and thought had prepared the fuel for it, remained still what he conceived of as his duty: but this was rather a way of living and thinking than an active struggle, an expenditure of time and money, or that expense of spirit which was even heavier and a more wasteful drain. A small body of his own immediate circle, those connected with him by friendship or neighbourhood, had hitherto been organized as the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League. They now seceded along with him, and formed themselves into an independent body named the Hammersmith Socialist Society. The session was resolved upon on the 21st of November. Two days afterwards they met, to the number of about a dozen, and organized themselves under a very simple body of rules. The circular, drafted by Morris, which they sent out to the other branches of the Socialist League in England and Scotland—by this time their number had dwindled to ten, four in London and six in the provinces—is studiously quiet in its wording.

"We think it proper," he wrote, "to write you a brief explanation of the action which the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League has thought it necessary to take in separating itself from the League.

“It has been impossible for us to be blind to the fact that there have been once more growing up two parties in the League, one of which has been tending more and more to Anarchism, and the other has been opposed to that tendency; the paper of the League, the *Commonweal*, has, by a vote of the last Conference, been put into the hands of those who represent the Anarchist views: and the majority of the Council are of that way of thinking. Several articles have appeared in the *Commonweal* with the approbation of the majority of the Council, which we have felt did not represent our opinions. Under these circumstances there were two courses for us to pursue; first to remain in the League, and oppose whatever seriously thwarted our views, and secondly to withdraw from it, and carry on our propaganda independently. We have chosen the second course; because we believe in the sincerity of our comrades with whom we disagree; and we think that however much they might be disposed to yield to us and to keep articles which we should not approve of out of the paper, they could not do so without looking upon us as a drag upon their freedom of speech and action. And moreover a great part of our time which could be spent in attacking capitalism would have to be wasted in bickering with our own comrades. Therefore we think it much better to retire in a friendly way, keep our own freedom and not interfering with that of others, and thus have formally withdrawn ourselves from the League.

“We have reconstituted ourselves under the name of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, and hope and believe that our efforts in pushing forward Socialism will be rather stimulated than retarded by the new position that we have been forced into, and that we shall take every opportunity, whenever we feel ourselves able to do so, of acting cordially with all bodies of Socialists both in and out of the Socialist League.”

Throughout the year the project of his new printing press and the work to be done in connection with it had swallowed up all other interests. Even his own work in romance-writing

and translating Sagas from the Icelandic took a second place to it. But at these employments, and at his Merton Abbey work, he was also fairly busy, and well contented with them all. In February the magnificent Arras tapestry of the Adoration of the Kings which now hangs in Exeter College Chapel was finished to his complete satisfaction ; nothing better of the kind, he said, had ever been done, old or new. The admission to partnership in the firm of Morris & Co., of Messrs F. & R. Smith, the two principal sub-managers after Mr. George Wardle's retirement, had relieved Morris from a great deal of the purely mechanical or commercial details of management. The romance entitled " The Story of the Glittering Plain," was written this spring, and was published in the English Illustrated Magazine, in the four numbers for the months of June to September. It is perhaps best known as the first book printed at the Kelmscott Press. But it is likewise notable as marking the full and unreserved return of the author to romance. In " The House of the Wolfings," and even to some degree in " The Roots of the Mountains " also, there had been a semi-historical setting, and an adherence to the conditions of a world from which the supernatural element was not indeed excluded, but in which it bore such a subordinate place as involved no violent strain on probability. Here the imagined world is of no place or time, and is one in which nothing is impossible. The dreamer of dreams has returned to that strange Land East of the Sun, mingled of Northern Saga and Arabian Tale, through which the Star-Gazer had passed two and twenty years before in the days of " The Earthly Paradise " : a land in which, like Odysseus, and his comrades in the isle of Circe, " we do not know where is the dusk nor where the dawn." The book which the King's daughter shows to Hallblithe in his dream on the Acre of the Undying is a sort of figure of that glittering world, rich with all imagined and unimaginable wonders, into which Morris had entered long ago, and the door of which always remained open to him.

"She had in her hand a book covered outside with gold and gems, even as he saw it in the orchard-close aforetime : and he beheld her face that it was no longer the face of one sick with sorrow ; but glad, and clear, and most beauteous. Now she opened the book and held it before Hallblithe and turned the leaves so that he might see them clearly ; and therein were woods and castles painted, and burning mountains, and the wall of the world, and kings upon their thrones, and fair women and warriors, all most lovely to behold, even as he had seen it aforetime in the orchard when he lay lurking amidst the leaves of the bay tree."

"News from Nowhere", had been revised about the same time and was published as a cheap volume in paper covers, which had a large circulation. It is a curious fact that this slightly constructed and essentially insular romance, has, as a Socialist pamphlet, been translated into French, German, and Italian, and has probably been more read in foreign countries than any of his more important works in prose or verse. The romance itself—if it would not be more correct to speak of it as a pastoral—is of such beauty as may readily win indulgence for its artificiality. A pastoral, whether it places its golden age in the past or the future, is by the nature of the case artificial, and perhaps as much so, though not so obviously, as when it boldly plants itself in the present. The immediate occasion which led Morris to put into a connected form those dreams of an idyllic future in which his mind was constantly hovering was no doubt the prodigious vogue which had been obtained the year before, by an American Utopia, Mr. Bellamy's once celebrated "Looking Backward." The refined rusticity of "News from Nowhere" is in studied contrast to the apotheosis of machinery and the glorification of the life of large towns in the American book ; and is perhaps somewhat exaggerated in its reaction from that picture of a world in which the *phalanstere* of Fourier seems to have swollen to delirious proportions, and State Socialism has resulted in a monstrous and almost incredible centralization.

Indeed a merely materialist Earthly Paradise was always a thing Morris regarded with a feeling little removed from disgust. That ideal organization of life in which the names of rich and poor should disappear, together with the things themselves, in a common social well-being, was in itself to him a mere body, of which art, as the single high source of pleasure, was the informing soul. "Mr. Bellamy worries himself unnecessarily," he had said in an article in the *Commonweal* on this very book and its ideas in June, 1889, "in seeking, with obvious failure, some incentive to labour to replace the fear of starvation, which is at present our only one ; whereas it cannot be too often repeated that the true incentive to useful and happy labour is, and must be, pleasure in the work itself." That single sentence contains the sum of his belief in politics, in economics, in art.

The thought is thus expanded in the same article. "It is necessary to point out," he writes, "that there are some Socialists who do not think that the problem of the organization of life and necessary labour can be dealt with by a huge national centralization, working by a kind of magic for which no one feels himself responsible : that on the contrary it will be necessary for the unit of administration to be small enough for every citizen to feel himself responsible for its details and be interested in them ; that individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on the shoulders of an abstraction called the State, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other : that variety of life is as much an aim of true Communism as equality of condition, and that nothing but an union of these two will bring about real freedom : that modern nationalities are mere artificial devices for the commercial war that we seek to put an end to, and will disappear with it : and finally, that art, using that word in its widest and due signification, is not a mere adjunct of life which free and happy men can do without, but the necessary expression and indispensable instrument of human happiness."

The first type he produced for the Kelmscott Press, cost Morris almost infinite pains. "What I wanted," he writes of it himself in the Note on his aims in founding the Kelmscott Press, "was letter pure in form; severe, without needless excrescences; solid, without the thickening and thinning of the line which is the essential fault of the ordinary modern type, and which makes it difficult to read; and not compressed laterally, as all later type has grown to be owing to commercial exigencies. There was only one source from which to take examples of this perfected Roman type, to wit, the works of the great Venetian printers of the fifteenth century, of whom Nicholas Jenson produced the completest and most Roman characters from 1470 to 1476. This type I studied with much care, getting it photographed to a big scale, and drawing it over many times before I began designing my own letter; so that though I think I mastered the essence of it, I did not copy it servilely; in fact, my Roman type, especially in the lower case, tends rather more to the Gothic than does Jenson's."

With the beginning of 1891 the Kelmscott Press actually started working. Its first premises, a cottage on the Upper Mall of Hammersmith a few yards from Kelmscott House, were taken possession of on the 12th of January. A proof-press and a printing-press were got and set up there. The first sample of the paper arrived on the 27th, and the first dull trial page was set up and printed on the 31st. During February a sufficient working stock of both type and paper was delivered, and the regular working of the Press began.

The first sheet of "The Story of the Glittering Plain," which was the first book printed at and issued from the Kelmscott Press, was printed off on the 2nd of March, and the last on the 4th of April. Only two hundred copies on paper, besides six on vellum, were printed. It was issued in May by Messrs. Reeves and Turner, Morris's ordinary publishers. The printing had been carried through under great difficulties. Towards the end of February Morris was laid up for several

weeks with a severe attack of gout, attended by other symptoms of an alarming kind. On consultation the kidneys were found to be gravely affected; and he was told that henceforth he must consider himself an invalid to the extent of husbanding his strength and living under a very careful regimen.

In the height of the attack, and before he was able to hold a pen, "my hand seems lead and my wrist string—" he writes to Ellis with unconquerable spirit. "'Tis a fine thing to have some interesting work to do, and more than ever when one is in trouble—I found that out the other day."

The volume of his own collected verses which, under the title of "Poems by the Way", was the second book issued from the Kelmscott Press, did not actually begin to be printed till July: but during May he was busy in collecting and passing judgement on those shorter unpublished poems of his own which were to form its main contents. He was habitually careless about his own manuscripts, and kept no record of what he had written or even of what he had published. Without the help of Mr. Fairfax Murray, into whose hands a number of the unpublished manuscripts had passed, and who had kept a record of all the poems which had ever been printed in magazines or elsewhere, the collection could hardly have been made.

In this pleasant work, and in the active joy of returning health, the spring and summer passed easily away. "The blossom is splendid," he writes on the 10th of May. "London in the older parts like the Inns of Court really looks well in this spring-time with the bright fresh green against the smoky old walls. Spring over, it becomes London again, and no more an enchanted city." "I have the usual complaint at my pen's end of nothing to tell," he adds two days later. "The weather is beautifully bright and quite hot; the pear and cherry blossom is going off, and spring will soon have slid into summer, though the lilac is yet to come."

At the end of July he writes from Folkstone to Mrs. Burne-Jones just before starting on a tour in Northern France with his

daughter Jenny: "I am ashamed to say that I am not as well as I should like, and am even such a fool as to be rather anxious—about myself this time. But I suppose the anxiety is part of the ailment. I hope you are better, as I have still some anxiety left for the service of my friends."

The French tour of three weeks in August was the renewal of one of his earliest affections: and he writes that his delight in the country, "the river-bottoms with the endless poplar forest, and the green green meadows," and in the beautiful churches, was as keen and as unclouded as it had been thirty-three years before. "I have given myself up to thinking of nothing but the passing day and keeping my eyes open."

On the 23rd September he writes to his daughter Jenny at Kelmscott: "I expect the book"—the "Poems by the Way"—"will be all printed tomorrow, and will go to the binders on Monday. They are printing the colophon sheet to-day, which is exciting. Item, Mr. Quaritch has sent me in a specimen copy of volume 2 of the Saga Library, so I suppose I shall bring it along with me. I shall probably bring along a copy of the cheap 'Glittering Plain,' and the cheap 'Poems by the Way' will soon be out. So you see, my own, that if it doesn't rain 'blue elephants' it may almost be said to rain new books of mine. Do you know, I do so like seeing a new book out that I have had a hand in. Mr. Prince is also getting on with the new fount of type, but when I shall begin to print with it I really don't know.

"I am going to give a dinner party on Friday to Ellis, Phillis and Cuthbert and Harry. And then on Saturday, ho for Kelmscott! I shall be so glad to see my dear again."



## CHAPTER XVIII

### **Printing, Romance-writing, Translation, and Criticism : Final attitude towards Art and History**

1891-1893

The life of Morris from that autumn until his last illness was one of placid continuity of production, with little variety of external incident. From the illness of the spring of 1891 he never fully recovered ; and though he enjoyed several years more of fair health, his bodily powers became gradually less able to respond to the calls of his unflagging intellectual energy. The amount of work he had already done, in literature, in art, in politics, in handicraft, was enough to fill not one, but many lives ; and the machinery which had been working at continuous high pressure for so long began to show signs of permanent weakening. But in these latter years his whole personality ripened and softened. The outbursts of temper so familiar to his earlier friends ceased. The impatience born of intense craving for sympathy and understanding died away. The training of the years of co-operation with impracticable colleagues in the Socialist party had not been lost. Mr. Selwyn Image, speaking from intimate acquaintance as a colleague on the executive committee of the Arts and Crafts Society and in the Art Workers' Guild, records, as the deepest impression made on him, that of Morris's extraordinary patience and conciliatoriness : and the same testimony is borne by others who worked along with him. "O how I long to keep the world from narrowing me, and to look at things bigly and kindly !" Thus he had written, in a letter of more than usually intimate self-revelation, nearly twenty years before : and the prayer had been heard.

The Kelmscott Press remained until towards the end of these years his engrossing preoccupation. Next to it in his

interest were his own romances. He had practically ceased to write original poetry.

Besides his own story-writing, he continued the pleasant labour of translating from the Icelandic and mediæval French. He lectured, when time and strength permitted, on the arts of life, more especially now on printing and its kindred arts. He remained active in the service of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings. Whether in the defence of ancient buildings like Westminster Abbey and Peterborough Cathedral against the injuries of the restorer, or in the protection of the natural beauties of England, as in Epping Forest or on the upper Thames, against the inroads of planned ugliness or inconsiderate change, his voice and pen were always active when called upon. Nor did he decline from the unobtrusive work of education towards the growth of a future Socialism. It is to these last years that some of his noblest and most significant utterances on the ideals of human life belong—notably among them the preface to Ruskin's chapter "On the Nature of Gothic," and the letter of November, 1893, on the Miners' Question, his latest and most carefully-worded confession of faith.

In November he was discussing the printing of all his own work, meaning then to begin with the "Sigurd." A second and larger press had been bought, and a new pressman and two new compositors engaged; and the printing of the Intermittent, as "The Golden Legend" had come to be called, was making rapid progress. Before the end of the year he was discussing the form of the great Chaucer which it was his ambition to print.

The small printing press had been occupied during the earlier part of the winter of 1891-2 in turning out the third of the Kelmscott Press books, the volume of poems by Mr. Wilfrid Blunt. As soon as that volume was finished, it was set to work upon a reprint of Ruskin's celebrated chapter "On the Nature of Gothic" from "The Stones of Venice." It was the

first thing that, when Morris met with it long ago at Oxford, had set fire to his enthusiasm, and kindled the beliefs of his whole life. In the preface to this reprint, dated 15th February, 1892, he stated briefly and clearly the effect which Ruskin's teaching had had on himself, and the permanent value which he still conceived it to possess. "To my mind," he says, this chapter "is one of the most important things written by the author, and in future days will be considered as one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century. To some of us when we first read it"—in those dawn-golden days at Oxford—"now many years ago, it seemed to point out a new road on which the world should travel. The lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it."

Even more: in this chapter, and in the subsequent teaching which did little more than expand and enforce it, Ruskin had laid, once for all, the basis for a true Socialism. For without art Socialism would remain as sterile as the other forms of social organization; it would not meet the real and perpetual wants of mankind. The social doctrines of the thinkers and theorists who had preceded Ruskin, like those of the others who, coming after him, had ignored or denied this essential element in his doctrine, would in practice "certainly lighten the burden of labour, but would not procure for it the element of sensuous pleasure which is the essence of all true art." Of themselves they could go no further in their utmost success than create a world in which art would be possible: but that world would be a body still waiting, numb, joyless, and lifeless, for the entrance of the quickening spirit.

This preface was no sooner written, than Morris followed it by another utterance which had had little public circulation, but which gives his best literary qualities—his power of lucid statement, his immense and easily-wielded knowledge of archi-

ture and history, his earnestness, his humour, and his mastery of biting phrase,—with a perfection that is hardly equalled elsewhere. This was the paper on Westminster Abbey written by him for the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings and finished on the 7th of March. Its immediate occasion was a proposal then being discussed for the “complete restoration” of the interior of the Abbey, and the addition to it, by public munificence or private enterprise, of some kind of annex which might give room for further monuments to distinguished men. That such a consummate monument of the noblest style and period of European architecture should be turned, as it long had been, into a “registration office for notorieties” was felt by him as wanton and inexcusable sacrilege; and this proposal not only to continue and extend that degrading usage, but to mutilate the Abbey still further under such a pretext by remodelling or enlargement, was one the mere mention of which roused him into fury. As regards the church itself, each fresh piece of restoration was in his deliberate judgement most scandalous and more ruinous than its predecessors. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it had indeed suffered heavily, but its worst sufferings had been reserved for modern times. “Being situated in the centre of government,” he bitterly writes, “it has not enjoyed the advantages of boorish neglect, which have left so much of interest in remoter parts of the country.”

“It may seem strange,” Morris adds, rising into the higher plane of his habitual thoughts, “that whereas we can give some distinguished name as the author of almost every injury it has received, the authors of this great epic itself have left no names behind them. For indeed it is the work of no one man, but of the people of south-eastern England. It was the work of the inseparable will of a body of men, who worked, as they lived, because they could do no otherwise, and unless you can bring these men back from the dead, you cannot ‘restore’ one verse of their epic. Rewrite the lost trilogies of Aeschylus,

put a beginning and an end to the Fight at Finsbury, finish the Squire's Tale for Chaucer, and if you can succeed in that, you may then 'restore' Westminster Abbey."

Once the Press was released from "The Golden Legend," the production of smaller books went on through the winter of 1892-93 with accelerated and almost reckless speed. Morris was advised that this rapid output of his books would depreciate the value of those already issued, and might end in the new books becoming unsaleable at their fair value. But for these warnings he did not greatly care: "the Kelmscott Press is humming" was his exultant comment, and he felt sure that his work was good enough to command a market.

By the end of 1892 Morris had made up his mind to add the trade of a publisher to that of a printer. "There is really no risk in it," he said in summing up the situation: "I shall get more money; and the public will have to pay less." The Kelmscott Press was not carried on to make money: at first he would have been content if it had not cost him more than he could afford to spend, and even afterwards it was worked, and the prices fixed for its products, only with the view of making its receipts meet its expenditure. No expense was spared in getting everything connected with it as near his ideal as could be produced; yet in fact it brought in a profit which represented a fairly adequate salary for his own incessant work and oversight, and relieved him from the necessity of economizing on any expense which would really add to the excellence and beauty of his printed books.

In the immense detail of carrying on the work of the Press, which was beyond a single person's management unless he could give up the whole of his time to it, Morris was already being assisted by Mr. S. C. Cockerell, who was formally engaged as secretary to the Press in July, 1894. It is only due to Mr. Cockerell to say that these last years of Morris's life were greatly lightened by his diligence and devotion. For the first time in his life his papers were kept in order; the labour of

correspondence, which had always been irksome to him, and was one of the few things that he felt as really hard work, was relieved: his library was catalogued; and the conduct, not only of the Press, but of his whole business, was made as easy to him as the nature of the case admitted. The relations between them grew to be of great intimacy and confidence, and added much to the happiness of both.

At the beginning of 1893 the beautiful little series of translations from thirteenth-century French prose romances which were printed by Morris in this and the following year began to be projected.

"I am very busy all round, and ought to be busier, but can't be," he cheerfully writes in March. He had set to work on designing the ornament for the Kelmscott Chaucer. That for the first page was just finished to his complete satisfaction. "My eyes! how good it is!" was his own criticism on it. He had also begun his metrical version of "Beowulf." That great fragment of the earliest English epic he had hitherto only admired from a distance. He was not an Anglo-Saxon scholar, and to help him in following the original he used the aid of a prose translation made for him by Mr. A. J. Wyatt, of Christ's College, Cambridge, with whom he also read through the original. The plan of their joint labours had been settled in the autumn of 1892. Mr. Wyatt began to supply Morris with his prose paraphrase in February, 1893, and he at once began to "rhyme up", as he said, very eager to be at it, "finding it the most delightful work." He was working at it all through the year, and used to read it to Burne-Jones regularly on Sunday mornings in summer. It was not fully finished till the end of 1894, and was published in February, 1895. It would seem on the whole, in spite of the love and labour Morris had bestowed on it, to be one of his few failures. Anglo-Saxon scholars do not regard it as a satisfactory rendering of the original; and

still less do ordinary readers find it a book that can be read with pleasure for its own sake.

The death of Tennyson in October, 1892, had left vacant the titular primacy of English poetry, which he had held for forty-two years. When the question of appointing a new Poet Laureate was opened, the name of Morris, as by amount and quality of actual work produced undoubtedly among the foremost of living English poets, was one of those which could not be ignored. His political creed would indeed have assorted but strangely with the holding of an office in the Royal Household ; nor could any one who knew him, however slightly, think without a smile of his writing official odes, or posing as the eulogist of the existing order and the triumphs of the Victorian age. As regards his personal views on the matter, Mr. Gladstone, who had then just become for the fourth time Prime Minister, kept his own counsel : and it is matter of common knowledge that no recommendation was ever made by him to the Queen, and that the office remained unfilled for three years during his Government and the administration which succeeded it. But after this lapse of time it may not be indiscreet to say that Morris was sounded by a member of the Cabinet, with Mr. Gladstone's knowledge and approval, to ascertain whether he would accept the office in the event of its being offered to him. His answer was unhesitating. He was frankly pleased that he had been thought of, and did not undervalue the implied honour : but it was one which his principles and tastes alike made it impossible for him to accept. The matter went no further. In private conversation Morris always held that the proper function of a Poet Laureate was that of a ceremonial writer of official verse, and that in this particular case the Marquis of Lorne was the person pointed out for the office—should the office be thought one worth keeping up under modern conditions—by position and acquirements.

While the Socialist organizations had been dwindling as active forces, the permeation of public opinion by Socialistic ideas had continued to make slow but noticeable progress. Taught by bitter experience, the more thoughtful Socialists no longer held haughtily aloof from the means at their hand by which they might take part in the work of local government. The old idea of obstructing reform in order to precipitate revolution did not now hold its place except among a few extremists. Work directed towards common objects began to make the differences on which the party had divided and subdivided itself fall back into something nearer their true proportion; and in 1893 efforts began to be made towards re-uniting the party. In these efforts Morris cordially joined, though he no longer accepted the position of a leader, or allowed the work he contributed towards this object to encroach largely on his time and energy. He defined the work to be done as the promotion of common ideals based on the teaching of history. Towards the object, he this year carefully revised the series of articles which he had written for the *Commonweal* between 1886 and 1888, in collaboration with Mr. E. B. Bax, and issued them as a volume under the title of "Socialism, its Growth and Outcome." On the last day of May—the anniversary which, under the name of Labour Day, it had been sought to constitute as an international festival of working classes both in Europe and America—he joined with Mr. Hyndman and Mr. G. B. Shaw, as the representative of the principal associations in England holding Socialist doctrines, in drawing up and issuing a new irenicon under the title of the "Manifesto of English Socialists." In this manifesto the common principles of the movement were once more stated, and a last appeal made towards the sinking of differences and the reinstatement of harmonious working on different methods towards common ends. It is signed by the fifteen members of the joint Committee which had been appointed for this purpose by the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, and the Hammer-



smith Socialist Society, and was issued with the authority of all three bodies.

The manifesto bears the traces of a joint authorship in which the hand of Mr. Shaw and the inspiration of Mr. Sidney Webb are more plainly visible than those of Morris. But it fairly represents the moderate and practical views which Morris held in the last years of his life. By a brief review of the facts it is shown that some constructive social theory is absolutely needed. Of these there are really only three. Two of the three must be rejected: the Feudal or Tory theory, which is incompatible with modern conditions and the facts of democracy; and the Manchester or Whig theory, which has completely broken down in practice. The third is Socialism. No amount of moralization of the conditions of a capitalist society based on private property can do away with the necessity for abolishing it, as a step towards the creation of the new social order. Legislative readjustments of industry and administration, while they may be desirable as temporary expedients, will not be permanently useful unless the whole state is merged into an organized commonwealth. For the realization of the new order, the whole community must possess complete ownership and control of the means for creating and distributing wealth; it must put an end to the wage-system; it must sweep away all distinctions of class, and finally establish national and international Communism. Anarchism, whether as a doctrine or a system of tactics, is formally repudiated in all its forms. The ameliorative measures which, under the heightened sensitiveness of the public conscience, are within the scope of practical politics, are not to be opposed, but supported and welcomed. The more that such measures give, either to individuals or to whole bodies of working class, of leisure for thought and freedom from anxiety, the more will that working class be able to turn their attention and exert their powers towards the introduction of a new social order based on equality of condition. There is therefore no reason why Socialists should not constitute them-

selves into a distinct party with definite immediate aims. Among these are mentioned an Eight Hours Act, an adequate minimum or living wage for all working men or women employed either in the Government service or in monopolists under partial state-control, the suppression of sub-contracting and sweating, and universal suffrage. Ten years had elapsed since a theory and a programme not unlike this had induced Morris to join the newly-founded Democratic Federation. The wheel might seem to have come full circle. But the experience, the thought, the labour of ten years, had given to all the terms employed, and to all the measures advocated, an enlarged and deepened meaning. There had been much disappointment, much disillusion, much wreckage of unverified beliefs, and extravagant hopes. The work had been tried by fire and tempest; over and over again had the superstructure crumbled or been consumed away down to the foundations. But these foundations, such was Morris's permanent conviction, were in the rock, and imperishable.

The formal organization of a united Socialist party was a matter which, though he was willing to co-operate towards its realization, he did not think of the first importance. On the 25th of October, 1894, he wrote on behalf of the Hammersmith Socialist Society to Mr. R. Blatchford, who had been urging this point in the *Clarion* newspaper. In that letter he expressed his conviction that the union if attainable, might and should be effected without any interference with the existing organizations. But he was equally clear that all minor differences among these organizations should be sunk in view of a general assent in the aim of nationalizing the means of production. A declaration of agreement in this aim would, he thought, be sufficient as a test of membership in a united Socialist party.

But in truth, as Morris well knew, the work of the Socialist party as a separate organization, whether acting as a united body or in detached and conflicting fragments, was for the time being already done. While Socialists were busy over their

friendly or embittered contests as to methods, the course of events had already decided the question, and the policy of permeation had slowly become not so much an accepted theory as a realized fact. The great lock-out in the English coal industry, which was the most important social event of the autumn and winter months of 1893, came at once as a result and a symbol of a new spirit; and the ideas that underlay it, formally expressed in the celebrated phrase, of the "living wage," were the first large outward manifestation of the beginnings of a new order of things, a new theory of human life. Almost for the first time, the cardinal doctrine began to take shape and assume consistence that the industrial and commercial system, no less than the political system of the country, was a means and not an end: and that the true end, for the sake of which alone these systems had any claim to respect or any right to existence, was the well-being of the nation, the humanization of human life. Such a humanized life, in which comfort and happiness should be alike within the reach of all, and in which all alike, rich and poor, should share, until the names rich and poor might finally become alike obsolete in a common condition of civic and national well-being, had been from the first what Morris had striven after. He had joined the Socialist movement as a means, however indirect or uncertain, towards bringing about that end: and neither in the State Socialism of his earlier, nor in the Communal Socialism of his later theory, did he see anything beyond states towards the birth of a final order. That final order might be described, for want of other terms, as the reorganization of the world under Socialism: but its actual nature, or the actual steps by which it was to be brought about, he perpetually insisted that it was impossible to lay out beforehand, or to forecast except by instinctive conjecture, and the imaginings of a prophet or a poet. As in Plato, the last words of philosophy were only to be expressed in the terms of a more or less conscious mythology. As in the days of Hebrew prophets,

the practical foundation of a kingdom of God on earth was to be wrought out by aid of that diffused imaginative ardour in which youngmen should see visions, and old men dream dreams. The visions of his own boyhood, the dreams of his own more advanced age, were but means towards expressing, and influences towards stimulating, the human movement itself, in which, through all doubts and discouragements, he had a permanent and a growing faith. No one insisted more strongly than he on the futility of any attempt to organize the future, or to lay down what would actually happen either in the progress towards the new age or in the final epoch of its attainment. In "The Dream of John Ball" he had shadowed out, in an allegorical setting of subtle and intricate beauty, the birth of a new world, seen, for one hour of intense spiritual exaltation, when the mediæval rebel and mystic and the modern Socialist joined hands over the white poppy-flower in the doubtful dusk between moonset and dawn. In such a vision, the prophetic soul of the world, dreaming on things to come, ranges disembodied and unconfined. The dreams which the present may have of an elusive or dimly-conjectured future no less than those which the past may once have had of a future that is not the present, must be no rational human forecast, but a tale told, like the vision of Er in Plato's "Republic", by one neither alive nor dead. In "News from Nowhere", he had, with a reversion to a simpler and less august sphere of imagination, clothed his own dream of a new age in the innocent draperies of a romantic pastoral. But the dreamer of dreams, the poet and romance-writer who habitually moved in a strange world of his own, was also a man of keen-sighted practical intelligence. When called on for action, he could dismiss all that world of dreams, or only retain from it that deeper insight and that wider outlook which is forbidden to men not endowed with the more than human gift of imaginative insight

## CHAPTER XIX

### Last Years

1894-1896

The great work of the Kelmscott Chaucer, which had been so long in preparation, was now fairly begun. "Chaucer getting on well ; such lovely designs," is a note made by him in early spring. At the end of June he writes that he hopes to begin the actual printing within a month, and that, in about three months more, all the pictures, and nearly all the borders, will be ready for the whole of the Canterbury Tales. His delight in the growing row of volumes from his own press was unabated ; and almost as great was his delight in giving copies to his more intimate friends. To Mr. Philip Webb, who had made some remonstrance against the extent of his generosity, he replied in the following letter :

" Kelmscott House,  
" August 27th, '94.

" My dear Fellow,

" A traveller once entered a western hotel in America and went up to the clerk in his box (as the custom is in that country) and ordered chicken for his dinner : the clerk, without any trouble in his face, put his hand into his desk, and drew out a derringer, wherewith he covered the newcomer and said in a calm historic voice : Stranger, you will not have chicken, you will have hash.

" This story you seem to have forgotten. So I will apply it, and say that you will have the Kelmscott books as they come out. In short you will have hash because it would upset me very much if you did not have a share in my ' larch.'

" You see as to all these matters I do the books mainly for you and one or two others. I tell you I *want* you to have them, and finally you shall.

" Yours affectionately,  
" William Morris."

The autumn at Kelmscott was unusually quiet and happy. A certain degree of physical feebleness had now become his normal condition ; he was seldom able to take long walks, or to spend whole days fishing ; but he delighted in driving among the beautiful and familiar villages, and in shorter walks near home.

At the beginning of 1895 Morris was carrying on all his multifarious occupations with unimpaired activity. Two presses were at work upon the Chaucer, and a third on smaller books. He was designing new paper-hangings ; he was going on daily with the writing of new romances ; he was completing, in collaboration with Mr. Magnusson, the translation of the *Heimskringla* which they had begun some three and twenty years before, and seeing it through the press for the Saga Library ; and he was busily increasing the collection of illuminated manuscripts, chiefly of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which towards the end of his life became his chief treasures and gave him extraordinary delight. With the two presses at work it now seemed possible to finish the Chaucer in a year, and the panics in which he sometimes fell over its slow progress were greatly allayed. Among the smaller books which the third printing-press was turning out was the volume of selected poems of Coleridge.

At the beginning of April he went down to Kelmscott. His anxieties about the Kelmscott Chaucer were not yet over. "The check of the Chaucer flattens life for me somewhat," he writes on the 19th of July, "but I am going hard into the matter, and have found out the real expert in the matter of inks and oils, and in about a fortnight hope to know the worst of it."

During this summer the gradual failure of Morris's strength became clearly noticeable. Languor insensibly stole over him. "It is sad," Sir Edward Burne-Jones wrote in autumn, "to see

his enormous vitality diminishing." He was less ready for any active expeditions, and began to suffer from sleeplessness.

During the winter he still went on lecturing from time to time as his strength allowed. In December the Chaucer was making such good progress that he began to design a binding for it. As the Chaucer approached completion, Morris became nervous about anything which threatened, however remotely to delay it. "I'd like it finished to-morrow," he answered, when asked how early a date would satisfy him for its appearance "every day beyond to-morrow that it isn't done is one too many."

With the turn of the year the weakness that had been gaining on him for some months became much more pronounced. He now suffered from an exhausting cough; he was losing flesh noticeably, and sleeplessness became a regular feature of his nights. The daily progress of the Chaucer was the one thing that kept up his interest. It was now within sight of completion. The last three of the wood-blocks had been brought him on the 21st of March. The Easter holidays in April, "four mouldy Sundays in a mouldy row, the press shut and Chaucer at a standstill," were almost more than he could bear.

On the 2nd of June the first two copies of the Chaucer came from the binder, one for himself and the other for Burne-Jones. Morris's own copy is now in the library of Exeter College. The other was given on the 3rd of June by Sir Edward Burne-Jones to his daughter for her birthday. "I want particularly to draw your attention," Burne-Jones wrote of the volume when complete, and the feeling is one which Morris himself fully and cordially shared, "to the fact that there is no preface to Chaucer, and no introduction, and no essay on his position as a poet, and no notes, and no glossary; so that all is prepared for you to enjoy him thoroughly."

Thus the work which had been for just five years in project, and for three years and four months in actual preparation and execution, was brought to a conclusion. The printing had occupied a year and nine months. Besides Burne-Jones's eighty-seven pictures, it contains a full-page woodcut title, fourteen large borders, eighteen borders or frames for the pictures, and twenty-six large initial words. All of these besides the ornamented initial letters large and small, were designed by Morris himself, as was the white pigskin binding with silver claps, executed at Mr. Cobden-Sanderson's bindery by Mr. Douglas Cockerell, in which the Kelmscott Chaucer received its complete form.

It was his last finished work. His weakness was already so great that the ambiguous reports of professional advisers could no longer conceal the fact that the end was not far off. He still, on days when the depression of his illness was less severe, cherished the hope of going on with the great Froissart which was to be a sister volume to the Chaucer, and with the sumptuous folio edition of his own "Sigurd the Volsung."

For the greater part of June he had been, by medical advice, staying at Folkstone to try the effects of change of air, but without any beneficial result. His nervous prostration had by this time become very great. On his return to London early in July, he went to report himself to Sir William Broadbent. "He thought me a little better (I'm not), and ordered me a sea voyage."

The voyage fixed on was one to Norway. They started on the 22nd July. The last entry in his diary had been made on the 20th.

But the voyage, whether wisely counselled or not, was not happy either in its progress or in its results. His beloved books and manuscripts had to be left behind: he suffered from almost constant weariness and restlessness: he was not able to make any excursions inland, and the melancholy of the firths struck a chill on his spirits in spite of fine weather and warm



suns. Off Bergen a last gleam of the Viking spirit came over him as he gazed on "the old hills which the eyes of the old men looked on when they did their best against the Weirds." But his own fighting days were over.

He stayed at Vadsö near the North Cape for the week in which the steamer went on to Spitzbergen and returned. On the morning of the 18th of August he arrived again at Tilbury, with only one anxious wish, to get away to Kelmscott as soon as possible. But his illness took a serious turn a day or two afterwards, and the doctors had to forbid his removal. He never left Hammersmith again. He was so weak now that he had to dictate the few letters he wrote, though on some days he did a little designing of letters and ornaments for the Press. To his old friend, Mr. Thomas Wardle of Leek, who had written pressing him to try the effect of rest and the pure Derbyshire air at Swainslow, he wrote as follows, the body of the letter being dictated and the signature added feebly in his own hand:

" Kelmscott House,  
" August 26th, 1896.

" My dear Wardle,

" It is very kind of you to invite me to share in your paradise, and I am absolutely delighted to find another beautiful place which is still in its untouched loveliness. I should certainly have accepted your invitation, but I am quite unable to do so, for at present I cannot walk over the threshold being so intensely weak. The Manifold is the same river, is it not, which you carried me across on your back, which situation tickled us so much that, owing to inextinguishable laughter you very nearly dropped me in. What pleasant old times those were.

" With all good wishes and renewed thanks,

" I am yours very truly,  
" William Morris."

On the 8th of September, with some difficulty, he dictated the last dozen lines of "The Sundering Flood" to Mr Cockerell, and seemed to find relief in having been able to bring it to a conclusion. The last letter he had been able to write himself was one of a few lines to Lady Burne-Jones, who was at Rottingdean on the 1st of September. "Come soon," it ends, "I want a sight of your dear face."

During his absence had been issued the first volume of a sumptuous eight-volume edition of "The Earthly Paradise". A second volume was issued in September. The remaining six, all of which include borders and half borders specially designed by him and not used in any other book, were completed and issued after his death.

Morris himself was now known by his friends to be a dying man. On his return from Norway congestion of the left lung had set in, which remained persistent, and the general organic degeneration made steady progress. His old fear of death had long left him, but his desire to live remained almost as strong as ever till he became too weak to desire anything. As the power of self-control slackened, the emotional tenderness which had always been so large an element in his nature became more habitually visible. On one of her latest visits, Lady Burne-Jones tells me, he broke into tears when something was said about the hard life of the poor. He had a longing to hear for the last time some of that older music for which he had so great an admiration. Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch brought down a pair of virginals to Kelmscott House, and played to him several pieces by English composers, of the sixteenth century. A pavan and galliard by William Byrd were what Morris liked most. He broke into a cry of joy at the opening phrase, and after the two pieces had been repeated at his request, was so deeply stirred that he could not bear to hear any more.

During the last weeks he was attended, beyond his own family, by the untiring devotion of his friends. Miss Mary De

Morgan brought to this last service all the skill born of long experience, and the intelligent sympathy of an affection which Morris had for many years cordially returned. Sir Edward and Lady Burne-Jones, Mr. Webb, and Mr. Ellis were with him almost daily. Mr. Cockerell was ceaseless in his zeal and care; and Mr. Emery Walker nursed him with the patience and tenderness of a woman. On the morning of Saturday the 3rd of October, between eleven and twelve o'clock he died quietly and without visible suffering.

No man on earth dies before his day: and least of all can the departure be called premature of a man whose life had been so crowded in activity and so rich in achievement. To one judging by the work done in it, his working day was longer and ampler than often falls to the lot of our brief and pitiable human race.

"Remembering those early years," says Sir Edward Burne-Jones, "and comparing them with the last in which I knew him, the life is one continuous course. His earliest enthusiasms were his latest." With all the patience and conciliatoriness of his later years, he remained absolutely unshaken in his loyalty to his old opinions and to his old associates. "He was most tolerable with the opinions of others," are the quaint but touching words of one of his colleagues of the Socialist League. But his own opinions were never withdrawn or concealed; and to the last he could be roused to anger by any slighting words about things for which his own admiration was a fixed article of faith.

With well-meaning persons who came to him for advice or information he had grown wonderfully tolerant. His patience even extended to others less worthy of it: to those who came to him with the more or less concealed intention of getting something to their own advantage out of him, or in order to instruct him on matters in which he had taught their teachers. When his activity in the Socialist movement

brought round him a mass of more or less disreputable professing adherents, whose application of the principles of Socialism did not go much beyond the idea that Morris should share his money with them, he carried his indulgence to an extreme pitch. He told a friend of his once that a young man and woman, quite unknown, had called on him and asked him to give them a start, as they were going to be married. "Were they Socialists?" his friend asked. "I don't know," Morris answered; "I suppose so. I gave them five pounds to get rid of them, as I was busy."

The life of insults through which he had passed both before and after he became a Socialist had at last left him almost secure of his own temper. His friend, Mr. Newman Howard, has told me that once when they had been doing business together, he took Morris to his own club, which was a Conservative one. An acquaintance of Mr. Howard's, who did not know Morris, sat down at the same table with them, and opened conversation with Morris by asking, "Well, what do you think of these strikes? I can tell you: it isn't so much the workmen; it's those damned Socialist leaders. They are infernal thieves and rascals, the whole lot of them." Bland and impenetrable, Morris only answered "Indeed", in such a quiet flat voice as made it impossible to continue the subject.

One result of that growing patience was to make him more indifferent to criticism. As much from a certain "child-like shamelessness" which has been noted by one of his most intimate friends as his deepest quality, as from his no less unique self-absorption in his own thoughts and feelings, external criticism had never much affected him. No doubt there must have been a certain loss in this carelessness to the effect which his work, and he himself, made on others. Criticism has its value in letting an artist, or a human being see, more clearly than he could do of his own self, to what he, and his work really amount for his fellow-artists and fellow-

creatures : and the absence of sensitiveness in an artist to the effect produced by his work may imply even for the work itself a certain loss of sensitiveness and flexibility. With Morris one often felt that it would make little or no difference to him if no one else ever saw his designs or read his books. Certainly it made no difference to him whether they met with approval from the world, or even from other artists in other methods. He might have taken for his own an ancient Celtic saying : " God has made out of his abundance a separate wisdom for everything that lives, and to do these things is my wisdom."

To criticism of his writings, whether in prose or verse, he was particularly indifferent. In his poem and his prose romances alike, he had set before himself an object or an effect with perfect clearness : how far he had executed his own design, how far fallen short of it, he felt he knew better than any one could teach him. The adverse criticisms encountered by his prose romances on the ground of their mannerisms of vocabulary and construction never induced him to modify the diction which he had chosen, and which was in truth natural to him in a much deeper way than modern newspaper English is natural to the ordinary educated writer. The common literary English of the present day Morris denounced as "a wretched mongrel jargon," corresponding in its own vices to the so-called modern architecture. His own prose style, so difficult to the average careless reader, he maintained to be far simpler and more natural. His prose was as sincere, and as little a forced copy of mediæval work, as were his illuminated manuscripts, or his painted windows.

For the refined products of modern ingenuity which did not root themselves back on that old tradition, he has as little taste in literature as in painting. For refinement of style, for subtle psychology in creation, he had but little taste. He could not admire either Meredith or Stevenson. When he was introduced to Ibsen's plays, and called on to join in admir-

ing their union of accomplished dramatic craftsmanship with the most modern movement of ideas, they were dismissed by him in the terse and comprehensive criticism, "Very clever, I must say." But neither did elaboration of style nor advanced modernism of treatment stand in the way of his appreciation when the substance of a book was to his liking; and among the books which in recent years he praised most highly were the masterpieces of Pierre Loti and Maurice Maeterlinck.

"Master of himself and therefore of all near him," Morris at the same time retained the most childlike simplicity in the expression of his actual thoughts or feelings on any subject, and was as little hampered by false shame as he was guided by convention. In some points he remained an absolute child to the end of his life. If you introduced him to a friend, and he had the faintest suspicion that he was there to be shown off, his manners instantly became intolerable. As childlike was another of his characteristics, the constant desire to be in actual touch with the things he loved. He became a member of the Society of Antiquaries for no other reason than that he might be part-owner of one of their mediæval painted books. The mere handling of a beautiful thing seemed to give him intense physical pleasure. "If you have got one of his books in your hands for a minute," Burne-Jones said of him, "he'll take it away from you as if you were hurting it, and show it you himself." He never in any case could conceal his hand in a matter of business: but when he was bargaining with Quaritch for an old book of which the possession meant more to him than the price, he would make the fact plain by carrying on the negotiation with the book tucked tightly under his arm, as if it might run away.

Seriousness and simplicity of mind, even more than the less approachable and intelligible qualities of his lonely genius, was what held his friends to him with a strength of

attachment that neither his own inner remoteness nor his swift turns from one interest to another could loosen. They often had a sense of being dragged at his heels, perplexed and out of breath; but they felt through it all that to his own eyes the way lay perfectly straightforward. For as long as he lived those who knew him felt confident that he would be in the fullest sense, and at every moment, alive: this or that interest might pass, one or another occupation be taken up or discarded, but the interest of living, the occupation of creating and working, would never lessen or falter.

To the same quality, the seriousness and simplicity which walked, without noticing them, through all the hedges and over all the ditches of worldly convention, it was due that he was so conspicuously at his ease in the society of a class different from his own. Civility to inferiors was certainly not one of his strong points; and the aristocratic temper of his youth would show itself even in his latest years. But it was a temper rather than a principle; in a very real sense he treated his servants or workmen as he treated his social equals; and though he often, in the terse phrase of common usage, wiped his boots on a man, he never either showed or felt towards him the more stinging insolence of condescension. To working men he was like one of themselves, one who worked as they did and lived a quite intelligible life, but who was full of queer, and for the most part fantastic or unintelligible, ideas. Yet many letters received after his death show that working men held him in real honour, and felt a personal grief for the loss of one who had been on their side, who had meant well by them, who had brought to some degree a new meaning into their own life. Such tributes are apt to be paid in an artificial currency; but in these letters a sincere emotion struggles to express itself through the worn and ill-fitting phrases. In an ill-spelled and touching letter, the Walthamstow Branch of the Navvies' and General Labourers' Union expressed their admiration for his

“ noble works and a genuine counsel,” “ the seed that so noble a man sowed in his great and useful life.” On behalf of a Lancashire Branch of the Social Democratic Federation their secretary wrote, “ Comrade Morris is not dead; there is not a Socialist living would believe him dead, for he Lives in the heart of all true men and women still and will do so to the end of time.” In even simpler words one of the textile workers at Merton Abbey wrote to Mrs. Morris, “ Dear Madam, I loved and honoured my Master, therefore I mourn with you, excuse this intrusion, I cannot help it. May God support and comfort you is the prayer of your faithful servant.”

In the Northern Sagas, as in the heroic cycle of ancient Greece, a man's life is not fully ended till he has been laid under ground, and the accident of death has been followed by the sacred offices of burial. That reluctance to end the story, to part with its hero until the funeral pyre was out and the last valediction over, was an attitude of mind which Morris himself specially loved; and if we may believe that any sense of the last rites performed over them may touch the dead, he might find a last satisfaction in the simple and impressive ceremony of his funeral. He was buried in the little churchyard of Kelmscott on the 6th of October. The night had been wet, and morning lightened dully over soaking meadows, fading away in a blur of mist. As the day went on, the wind and rain both increased, and rose in the afternoon to a tempest. The storm, which raged with great violence over the whole country, with furious south-westerly gales, reached its greatest force in the upper Thames valley. The low-lying lands were flooded and all the little streams that are fed from the Cotswolds ran full and deep brown. The noise of waters was everywhere. Clumps of Michaelmas daisies were in flower in the drenched cottage gardens, and the thinning willows had turned, not to the brilliance of their common October colouring, but to a dull tarnished gold. The rooks were silent in the elms about the Manor



House. Apples lay strewn on the grass in the orchard. In the garden, the yew dragon, untrimmed since his own hand had last clipped it, had sprouted out into bristles. A few pink roses and sweet peas still lingered among the chrysanthemums and dahlias of the autumnal plots.

One of the farm wagons, with a yellow body and bright red wheels, was prepared in the morning to carry the coffin from Lechlade station ; it was drawn by a sleek roan mare and led by one of the Kelmscott carters. The wagon was wreathed with vine, and strewn with willow boughs over a carpeting of moss. In it the coffin, simple and even beautiful in its severe design, of unpolished oak with wrought iron handles, was placed on its arrival and over it was laid a piece of Broussa brocade which had been long in Morris's possession, and a wreath of bay. The group of mourners followed it along the dripping lanes, between russet hedgerows and silver greyslabbed stone fences, to the churchyard gate, and up the short lime-avenue to the tiny church. There the Rev. W. F. Adams, Vicar of Little Farringdon, Morris's schoolfellow at Marlborough, and the friend and neighbour of later years at Kelmscott, read the funeral service. With the family and friends were mingled workmen from Merton Abbey and Oxford Street, comrades of the Socialist League, pupils of the Art Workers' Guild, and Kelmscott villagers in their daily working dress. There was no pomp of organized mourning, and the ceremony was of the shortest and simplest. Among associates and followers of later years were the few survivors of that remarkable fellowship which had founded the Oxford Brotherhood and the Firm of Red Lion Square ; and at the head of the grave Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the closest and the first friend of all, stood and saw a great part of his own life lowered into earth. "What I should do, or how I should get on without him," he had once said when Morris's increasing weakness became alarming, "I don't in the least know. I should be like a man who has lost his back."

As dusk fell, the storm swept more fiercely over Oxford. The driving rain found its way through the roof of the Union Library, and carried away patches of the faded painting with which, in the ardour of his first devotion to art, amid an unbroken band of kindred spirits, confident in youth, united in faith and friendship, he had adorned it thirty-nine years before. A new age had since then risen over a new England, and those early days were already receding into the dimness of an almost fabulous past.

*Principes mortales, rem publicam æternam esse ; proin repeterent sollemnia* : the cold and august words of the Roman Emperor may best express the feeling with which that funeral company dispersed to their homes. A great personality had ceased : yet the strongest feeling in the minds of the survivors was rather that it had returned to, than, in the customary phrase of common usage, passed away from earth. Among the men and women through whom he had so often moved as in a dream, isolated, self-centred, almost empty of love or hatred, he moved no more. It seemed natural that he should go out from among them, not being really of them. "He doesn't want anybody," so his most intimate friend once said of him : "I suppose he would miss me for a bit, but it wouldn't change one day of his life, nor alter a plan in it. He lives absolutely without the need of man or woman. He is really a sort of Viking, set down here, and making art because there is nothing else to do." Far less easy to realize was his absence henceforward from the surroundings in which and through which he lived almost as in a bodily vesture : from his books and manuscripts, from his vats and looms, from the greygabled house and the familiar fields, from the living earth which he loved with so continuous and absorbing a passion.

"It came to pass," says the ancient forgotten author of the Volsunga Saga, when he has to tell of the death of the father of King Volsung, "that he fell sick and got his death, being mind-

ed to go home to Odin, a thing much desired of many folk in those days." With no such desire had this last inheritor of the Viking spirit approached his end. To be, "though men call you dead, a part and parcel of the living wisdom of all things," still to live somewhere in the larger life of this, and no other world, such had been his desire, such his faith and hope throughout the loneliness and fixedness in which he had passed his mortal days. He might seem, now the entanglement of life was snapped, to have resumed his place among the lucid ranks that, still sojourning yet still moving onward, enter their appointed rest and their native country unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

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## NOTES

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2. **Shetland pony** : A small, stocky breed, which originated in the Shetland isles.  
**Epping Forest** : Former royal forest, now a pleasure ground.  
**Abraham and Isaac** : (Gen. XXII) Abraham laid his only son Isaac upon an altar to sacrifice him to Jehovah, when his hand was stayed and a ram substituted for Isaac.  
**Penny garlands** : (archaic) : Anthology or miscellany sold for a penny.  
**Lane's Arabian Nights** : English translation by E. W. Lane of the collection of Oriental tales known as "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments".  
**The Old English Baron** : a romance by Clara Reeve (1777).
3. **The Waverley novels** : by Sir Walter Scott.  
**Marryat** : Frederick (1792-1848). English naval captain and novelist.
4. **Middle Ages** : roughly the period between 1000-1400 A.D.  
**Canterbury** : Cathedral city of S. E. England, and seat of the Primate of the Church of England.  
**Gothic architecture** : Architecture in the pointed arch style prevalent in Western Europe in 12-16 c.c.  
**Thanet** : Isle of Thanet N. E. of Kent.  
**Swindon** : in Wiltshire.
5. **Savernake** : Savernake Forest.  
**Prefect** : A student monitor in English public and secondary schools.  
**The Downs** : Roadstead in North Sea, Kent.
6. **Anglo-catholicism** : The doctrines and practices of those in the Anglican communion who insist that the Reformation has not changed the Catholic character of the Church, since Catholicity is inherent in a Church whose episcopate can trace its line of descent from the apostles.  
**High Church** : The same as Anglo-Catholic.
7. **Holidays** : Note that there is no full stop here: Morris was always careless of punctuation.
8. **Dean Church** : Richard William (1815-1890), dean of St. Paul's; leading member of the high church party, and a man of letters.  
**Medea** : The title of a tragedy by Euripides, dealing with her vengeance upon Jason.
9. **The Day of the Duke of Wellington's funeral** : November 18, 1852, when he was buried under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral beside Lord Nelson.  
**Sussex chairs** : See page 127.  
**Edward Burne-Jones** : Sir Edward Coley (1833-1898), great painter and most intimate friend of Morris. "There was one contemporary whom it was impossible to discuss with Morris. That was the painter Edward Burne-Jones. The most innocent joke at his expense, to say nothing of any disparagement of his work, wounded Morris to a degree that roused him to fury" (G. B. Shaw).

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10. **A vision of grey-roofed houses etc** : See Chapter II of "A Dream of John Ball".  
**Gibbon** : Edward (1737-1794) English historian, famous as the author of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". His autobiography is a classic.
11. **Pembroke** : Pembroke College.  
**Dixon** : Richard Watson (1833-1900). Historian, poet, and divine.  
**Faulkner** : A fine mathematician, later partner in Morris & Co., lifelong friend of Morris.  
**Fulford** : William Fulford.
12. **Modern Painters** : The title of a study of modern art and artists (1843) by John Ruskin.  
**The Lady of Shalott** : a poem by Tennyson.  
**The Stones of Venice** : A treatise (1851-53) on art and architecture by John Ruskin.  
**Shelley** : Percy Bysshe (1792-1822). English poet.  
**Keats** : John (1795-1821). English poet.  
**Tennyson** : Alfred Lord (1809-1892). English poet.  
**Carlyle** : Thomas (1795-1881). Scottish essayist and historian.  
**De Quincey** : Thomas (1785-1859). English prose writer.  
**Thackeray** : William Makepeace (1811-1863). English novelist.
- Dickens** : Charles (1812-1870). English novelist.  
**Thorpe** : Benjamin (1782-1870). English philologist.  
**The great Scandinavian Epic** : "Sigurd the Volsung".
13. **Chaucer** : Geoffrey (1340-1400). English poet, the author of 'Canterbury Tales'.  
**Malory** : Sir Thomas. Born probably in England, lived in 15 c. Author of "Morte d'Arthur", or 'The Death of Arthur,' a compilation of Arthurian romance in prose.  
**Rossetti** : Dante Gabriel (1828-1882). English Pre-Raphaelite painter and poet.  
**Pre-Raphaelite school** : A group of English painters and poets of the 19th century, whose main principles were fidelity to nature, sincerity and delicacy of finish  
**Hungerford Pollen** : A noted painter.  
**Apocalypse** : The last book of the New Testament, otherwise called 'the Revelation of St. John the Divine'.
14. **Cuts and guards** : Offensive and defensive strokes.
15. **Van Eyck** : (1366-1426). Flemish painter.  
**Memling** : (1430-1495). Flemish painter.  
**Amiens, Beauvais and Chartres** : Places in France, famous for their Cathedrals.  
**Albert Durer** : (1471-1528). German painter and engraver.  
**Musee Cluny** : See notes of page 22 on page 223.  
**Louvre** : An ancient palace in Paris, which, with additions, is occupied by a museum of art and public offices. It is one of the largest groups of buildings in the world.  
**The Aims of Art** : First published as a pamphlet in 1887.
16. **The Crimean War** : War of 1853-1856 between Turkey and Russia, in which France, Great Britain, and Sardinia became involved on the side of Turkey; fought mainly in Crimea.

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**Crom Price** : Cormell Price, an intimate of the Morris circle.

**Topsy** : the name of the young negro slave girl of unkempt appearance in Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

18. **Mediaevalism** : devotion to the institutions, arts, and practices of the Middle Ages.

**The taking of Orders** : *i.e.* Joining a religious body, especially a monastic order.

**The Community at Littlemore** : The Village of Littlemore was in the parish of St. Mary's and here in 1836, Newman built a little Church to which he retired in the great crisis in his career when he hesitated between Protestantism and Catholicism. Before he retired to Littlemore, Newman preached sermons at St. Mary's which attracted large audiences.

19. **Sir Galahad** : In Arthurian legends, a celebrated knight of the Round Table, surnamed "the Chaste", who achieved the quest of the Holy Grail.

**Factory Acts** : The great development of English industry towards the end of the eighteenth century, unaccompanied by any State regulation or supervision, led to gross and widespread neglect of precautions for the preservation of the workers. In the last century a long series of 'factory acts' were passed designed to protect the health of labourers in factories and workshops, especially of women and children.

21. **Holman Hunt** : William (1827-1910). English Pre-Raphaelite painter.

**Beatrice** : A Florentine lady of noble family immortalized by Dante as the central figure of his 'Divine Comedy'.

**Millais** : Sir John Everett (1829-1896). English landscape and portrait painter.

**Madox Brown** : Oliver (1855-1874). English author and painter.

**The Germ** : a periodical of which the first number appeared in January 1850. It was the organ of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

**Hand and Soul, The Blessed Damozel** : by Rossetti.

**Folkestone** : In Kent, near Dover.

**Abbeville** : in France.

22. **Clermont** : Episcopal city in France.

**Cluny Hotel de** : A former palace in Paris of the abbots of Cluny. It was built in the 15th century and became the property of the State in 1843. Here a museum of mediaeval antiquities, called the 'Musée Hotel de Cluny' was placed in exhibition in 1844.

**Notre Dame** : Celebrated cathedral of Paris, built in the early 13th century.

23. **Flamboyant** : Characterised by waving or flamelike curves, as the tracery of windows etc. in the later French Gothic style, about 1450-1530.

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24. **Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite** : Palamon is a noble Theban youth in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale". Palamon and his friend Arcite become rivals in love for the fair Emelye. To decide the matter a tournament is held in which Arcite wins. But Arcite dies, and Palamon weds Emelye.  
**Eure** : A river running west of Paris.
25. **The Newcomes** : The title of a novel (1855) by Thackeray.  
**Havre** : Sea-port city in France.
26. **House Beautiful** : The phrase is John Bunyan's who gives a delightful description of the House Beautiful in his "The Pilgrim's Progress."  
**In the prose romance etc** : The opening passage in "Frank's Sealed Letter", a story contributed to the 'Oxford and Cambridge Magazine' and published by May Morris—collected edition Vol. I.  
**Unstable as water thou shalt not excel** : See Old Testament, Genesis, Chapter 49, verse 4.
27. **French Revolution** : A celebrated account of the famous revolution, published in 1837.  
**Southey** : Robert (1774-1843). English poet and miscellaneous writer.  
**Morte d' Arthur** : See notes of page 13, on page 222.
28. **Mr. Street** : George Edmund (1824-1881). English architect.  
**Colonel Newcome received Clive's intimation** : See Chapter XVII of Thackeray's "The Newcomes". The Colonel rather unwillingly reconciles himself to Clive's joining Gandish's School of Art.  
**Bohemia** : *i.e.* a community of Bohemians. A 'Bohemian' is a follower of art, literature or other intellectual pursuits, who adopts a mode of life in protest against, or indifference to the common conventions of society, especially in social relations.
30. **Henrietta** : Elder sister of Morris.
31. **Allingham** : William (1824-1889). Irish poet.
33. **Alfred Rethel** : (1816-1859). Noted German historical painter. The two paintings referred to are 'Death the Avenger' and 'Death the Friend'.
- Men and Women** : A collection of poems by Browning (1855).
35. **Lent term** : *i.e.*, from January to April. 'Lent' is the period from Ash Wednesday to Easter. 'Lent term' is the University term in which 'Lent' falls.  
**The Final Schools** : *i.e.* the periodical examination for the degree of B.A.
- Norman Shaw** : Richard Norman (1831-1912). London domestic architect.
38. **Palace of Art** : Alluding to an allegorical poem by Tennyson (1830). The object of the poem is to show that dwelling even in the palace of art will not give happiness, or that love of art will not alone suffice to make man happy.

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38. **Rapunzel, Guendolen** : In "Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems".
40. **Deverell** : Rossetti's particular friend, and a man attractive to all who knew him.
41. **Like incubi and succubi** : *i.e.* like hideous nightmares.  
**Barbarossa** : Literally, red beard ; a surname of Frederick I (1123-90), Holy Roman Emperor.  
**The Prioress's Tale** : One of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales".  
**Kelmscott Chaucer** : See Chapters XVII and XVIII.  
**Chaucer's favourite birds** : Nightingale, lark, turtle, dove and eagle come in for frequent praise in Chaucer's works.
42. **Robson** : (1836-1903). American actor.  
**Kean's Shakespearean pageant** : Charles John (1811-1868). He gave many Shakespearean revivals at Prince's which were marked by profuse scenic arrangements.  
**Richard The Second** : A poetical historical tragedy by Shakespeare.
- Benjamin Woodward** : (1815-61). Built the Oxford museum under Ruskin's supervision, 1855-58.
43. **Arthur Hughes etc** : noted painters of the day. Val Prinsep came to India along with the Prince of Wales (1875-76), and painted many Indian pictures.
44. **The new schools** : A 'school' here means 'a faculty or institution for specialised higher education'.  
**Palomydes** : (Palamedes) In Arthurian romance, Sir Palamedes is a Saracen Knight who was overcome in single combat by Tristram. Both loved Iseult (Isolde), the wife of King Mark.
46. **Dr. Henry Acland** : Sir Henry Wentworth (1815-1900) Regius professor of medicine, 1858-94 ; lifelong friend of Ruskin.
48. **Swinburne** : Algernon Charles (1837-1909). English poet.  
**Little Holland House** : The residence of the Prinseps in Kensington ; 'a rather romantic, rambling combination of two old houses in a spacious garden and with much of a country aspect.'
49. **Lambeth** : Lambeth Palace, the official London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury.  
**Rhine** : River in Switzerland, Germany and Holland, forming also part of the boundaries of Switzerland, Austria, France and Germany ; flows into the North Sea, 800 miles long.  
**Basle** : City on the Rhine in Switzerland.
50. **Stucco** : A material used in a plastic state, which can be trowelled to form a hard covering for exterior walls or other exterior surfaces of any building or structure.
52. **China** : Porcelain ware, so called (orig. 'Chinaware') in the 17th century, because it was brought from the Far East, and differing from the pottery made in Europe at the time.  
**Delft** : delftware ; originally, pottery made in the town of Delft in Holland ; in England popularly, common glazed pottery for table use.
54. **His sister** : Christina Georgina, 1830-1894.
55. **Upholsterer's Gothic** : Such Gothic as an upholsterer could give, *i.e.*, inferior and sham Gothic.



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**Bodley** : George Bodley ; Architect.**Scarborough** : In Yorkshire—one of the principal watering places of England.**Brighton** : Town in Sussex ; famous watering place.**Round Table** : alluding to King Arthur's Round Table. See page 19.56. **Camden Town** : A borough near London.58. **Ritualism** : The principles and practices of those in the churches of the Anglican Communion who have revived the use in church services of the symbolic ornaments and of various ritual acts and symbolic materials.**Aestheticism** : A movement to spread æsthetic influences and make people responsive to the beautiful in art and nature.59. **Little-hampton** : a sea-coast town in Sussex.60. **Lustre-plates** : *i.e.* Attractive dishes.61. **The tempera paintings** : A process of painting, in which albuminous or colloidal medium oftenest of white egg, is employed as a vehicle instead of oil.**Trojan War** : In Greek legends, the ten years' war waged by the confederated Greeks under Agamemnon against the Trojans and their allies, caused by the carrying off of Helen by Paris and ending in the destruction of Troy. Its events are told in 'The Iliad', 'The Odyssey' and 'The Aeneid'.62. **Bloomsbury** : A central district of London, containing the British Museum.**Chelsea** : A borough of S. W. London.64. **Pomegranate Paper** : One of the many wall papers designed by Morris.**South Kensington Museum** : The museum which is in Brompton, in the western part of London, was opened in 1857 for the purpose of promoting science and art. In 1899 extensive new buildings were begun, and the name was changed to the Victoria and Albert Museum.65. **Dryden** : John (1631-1700). English poet and dramatist.**The Canterbury Tales** : An uncompleted literary work by Chaucer, consisting mostly of narrative poems which he puts into the mouths of characters on a pilgrimage to Canterbury.66. **Swabian** : An inhabitant of Swabia (a part of Bavaria).**Breton** : A native of Brittany or Bretagne.**Norseman** : One of the ancient Scandinavians.**Byzantium** : Ancient city on the Bosphorus, later Constantinople and now Istanbul.**Varangian Guard** : One of the Northmen, composing the imperial bodyguard at Constantinople.**The Golden Fleece** : in Greek mythology. The fleece of gold taken from the ram that bore Phrixus through the air to Colchis. It was placed by Aëtes, King of Colchis, in a sacred grove, where it was guarded by a sleepless dragon, until it was stealthily won by Jason.**Aeneid** : An epic poem by Virgil, recounting the wanderings of Aeneas and his companions after the fall of Troy.

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- Odyssey** : An epic poem attributed to Homer, which describes the ten years' wanderings and adventures of Odysseus (Ulysses) in returning home to Ithaca after the siege of Troy.
67. **To act Advocatus Diaboli** : to play the devil's advocate, *i.e.*, to indulge in adverse criticism.
69. **Charles Cowden Clarke** : (1787-1877). English author and lecturer.
71. **Watt's great portrait** : See frontispiece. George Frederick (1817-1904); painted portraits of important persons of his day.
72. **Rum** : odd ; queer (slang).
73. **Izaak Walton** : (1593-1683). English writer; author of "The Compleat Angler".
- Samuel Johnson** : (1707-1784) English author and lexicographer.
- Baltic Sea** : sea in North Europe, East of Sweden and Denmark.
77. **Maud** : a dramatic poem by Tennyson.
- Gammon** : (colloq.), nonsense.
78. **William Cobbett** : (1762-1835). Essayist, politician and agriculturist; author of "Rural Rides".
- Peacock** : Thomas Love (1785-1866). Author of satirical novels; wrote poems also.
- Mr. Jorrocks** : The chief character of sporting novels by Surtees, including "Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities" (1838) and "Handley Cross".
- Surtees** : (1803-1864). English humorous novelist.
- Tristram** : the hero of a mediæval romance originally not connected with the Arthurian Cycle of Romances, but early incorporated into it with Tristram represented as a knight.
- Joe Gargery** : An illiterate blacksmith in Dickens's "Great Expectations", remarkable for simplicity, generosity and kindness of heart.
- Mr. Boffin** : A character (a dustman) in Dickens's "Our Mutual Friend". In Morris's "News From Nowhere" (chapter III) there is a dustman whose real name is Johnson, but who is called Boffin 'as a joke'. There the hero speaks of 'the many pleasant hours passed in reading Dickens'.
- Mr. F.'s Aunt** : An "amazing little old woman" in Dickens's "Little Dorrit".
80. **Psyche** : Beautiful princess beloved by Eros (Cupid); because of the jealousy of Venus, this mortal underwent many vicissitudes before she and her lover saw the consummation of their love in immortal union.
- Miss Mary de Morgan** : Lived as a member of Morris's family; sister of William de Morgan, artist-tile-maker and later writer of Dickensian novels.
83. **In the romance of a new Arcadia** : The description in the previous paragraphs is from "News From Nowhere", chapter XXI entitled 'An Old House Amongst New Folk'.
- An account of Kelmscott** : "Gossip About An Old House On The Upper Thames". Published in 'The Quest' November, 1894.

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85. **George I. panelling** : *i.e.* panelling done according to the early eighteenth century fashion. George I. was king of England during 1714-27.  
**Samson** : An Israelite Judge of Bible record (Judges XIII), distinguished for his great strength. He is betrayed by his mistress Delilah (Judges XVI).
86. **In his biography** : Malcolm Bell's "Sir Edward Burne-Jones : a Record and a Review."
88. **Whitsuntide** : Week which begins with Whitsunday, *i.e.*, seventh Sunday, or fiftieth day after Easter.  
**Johnson in the Hebrides etc.** : Johnson travelled with great zest in the island group west of Scotland (known as Hebrides) in 1781.  
**Byron in Greece** : When Byron visited Greece in 1809 he was greatly stirred. "From childhood he had loved this land, through the poets and the writers of history. To the natural beauties of the scene were added potent associations : courage, the love of freedom, the taste for beauty, eloquence—the grandest human virtues had sprung from this parched and pure soil." ("Byron" : A. Maurois).
90. **Renaissance** : Revival of classical learning and arts in Europe from the 14th to the 16th centuries, forming a transition between the Middle Ages and the modern world.  
**White-chapel** : A quarter of London just east of the city, now largely Jewish.
91. **Charles' Wain** : Group of seven stars in the constellation Ursa Major or Great Bear.  
**Volsungs** : Volsung is a king in Norse legend, great-grandson of Odin, father of Sigmund. The name 'Volsung' is applied to his descendants also.
93. **George Howard** : Lord Carlisle, a friend of the Morris family.
95. **St. Pancras** : A church near their lodgings in Red Lion Square.
96. **The 'Aeneids'** : (pl.) Are the cycle of legends connected with Aeneas.  
**Sigurd** : The hero of the 'Volsunga Saga'.
102. **Final author** : Virgil.  
**Well-known words of Aristotle** : See page 63 of Ingram Bywater's translation (Oxford at the Clarendon Press) : "The Art of Poetry".  
**Poseidon** : The god of the sea and of the watery elements generally.  
**Phaeacian romance** : In the "Odyssey", we read of the Phaeacians, one of the maritime people of Scheria, whose king Alcinous entertained Odysseus.
- Sigurd, Brynhild and Gudrun** : Heroes of the Volsunga Saga.
104. **Eastern Question** : The problem of international politics arising from the instability of the Mahommedan power of Turkey and its relations with the other nations of Europe.
105. **Lichfield** : Borough in Staffordshire, has a beautiful cathedral.  
**Tewkesbury** : Borough in Gloucestershire.  
**Scott** : Sir Gilbert (1811-1878). English Architect.
108. **The collapse of the Turkish Government etc.** : The Bulgarians defied the orders of the Turkish officials and put about

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one hundred of them to death. The Sultan wreaked his vengeance on the Bulgarians by letting loose a vast army of forces on the unarmed peasantry and committing what are known as "the Bulgarian atrocities".

109. **Into this work Morris flung himself etc. :** "The doings of 'the Unspeakable Turk' in Bulgaria were arousing English amazed indignation, and the chance of our being drawn into war with Russia as Turkey's ally was filling many people with apprehension. The Eastern Question Association was founded in the autumn of 1876, my father was treasurer, and all through that agitated time, he worked devotedly in the cause of peace and humanity". May Morris.

**The Russo-Turkish War :** The war between Russia and Turkey between 1877-78.

**The Tory Rump :** 'Rump' here means a small remaining group of a party.

110. **Lord Lawrence :** (1811-1879) was Governor-general of India ; opposed the proceedings (by a series of letters in 'the Times') that led to the Afghan War of 1878-79.

111. **Radical :** In politics, one who advocates radical and sweeping changes in laws and methods of government with the least delay, especially changes that it is believed will equalize social conditions, or remedy evils arising from them.

**Lyons :** City in South France.

**Riviera :** beautiful region along the Mediterranean sea extending from Nice (France) to Spezia (Italy).

112. **Ex-Spitalfields weaver :** 'Spitalfields' in East London was formerly a centre of silk weaving.

**Lago di Garda :** The largest lake of northern Italy.

113. **Torcello :** Near Venice in Italy, with beautiful ruins of a Cathedral.

**Padua :** City and capital of Padua Province in N. E. Italy.

**Verona :** Fortified town of N. Italy.

114. **Dr. George Macdonald :** (1824-1905). Scottish poet and novelist.

**The Retreat :** May Morris writes : "The house by the river received its name after sundry amusing discussions". Morris declined to pass his days in a house with the name "The Retreat". "People would think something was amiss with me and that your poor Mama was trying to reclaim me".

119. **Nonconformist :** One who does not conform to the doctrines of an established church (esp. those of the church of England).

121. **Sir Ed. Beckett :** Lord Grimthorpe. An authority on architecture and leader of the parliamentary bar.

123. **A little Palace of Art of one's own :** See page 38.

124. **Confusæ sonus urbis et i'letabile murmur :** On the death of Queen Amata, the Latins in their capital give way to frantic grief. Turnus, their champion, warring on the outskirts of the field, hears "the distracted city's roar and joyless din". (Virgil, Aeneid, XII, 619).

**Merton :** Urban district in Surrey.

**Epsom :** Urban district in Surrey.

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- Charing Cross** : A district in London to the south of Trafalgar Square, on the site of the old village of Cherringe.
125. **Wimbledon** : Municipal borough in Surrey.  
**Hammersmith** : A borough in London.  
**Quilp** : Quilp is a character in Dickens's " Old Curiosity Shop " who keeps a store of miscellaneous goods.
127. **Gres de Flandre ware** : Called also ' Cologne ware '—a glazed stoneware mottled with gray and brown, made into tankards, jugs etc. especially in the 16th and 17th centuries.
128. **Arras Tapestry** : A rich fabric with inwoven figures or scenes.  
**Gobelins** : Famous tapestry works in Paris, originally founded as a dye house by the Gobelin family in the 16th century. It was made a Royal manufactory under Louis XVI in 1662.
133. **Kermes** : Red dye-stuff consisting of dried bodies of the insect ' kermes ' .  
**Cochineal** : Dried bodies of insect reared on cactus used for making scarlet dye and carmine. Cochineal is cheaper than kermes.
135. **Blessed is that servant** : St. Luke, Chapter 12, Verse 43.
136. **Louis XIV's lockmaking** : (1754-1793). King of France ; weak in character and mentally dull. Amused himself with making locks.
138. **He once said to Mr. G. B. Shaw etc.** : In her " William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist " Vol. II (pages 76-77), May Morris writes the following passage :—  
 " Of what actually made Morris accept the Socialist idea, Shaw has a note in Pease's (*History of the Fabian Society*, which note is confirmed by the memory of friends with whom my father talked at the time. I must not quote all of the long passage, though making an extract is something of an injustice to the writer, as it runs on closely so as to be difficult to cut into. Shaw is speaking of the individualist teaching of J. S. Mill's earlier volumes of *Political Economy* and the ' Socialist conclusions ' at the end . . . ' It is due to Sidney Webb more than to any other disciple that it is now generally known that Mill died a Socialist. Webb read Mill and mastered Mill as he seems to have read and mastered everybody else ; but the only other prominent Socialist who can be claimed by Mill as a convert was rather unexpectedly, William Morris, who said that when he read the passage in which Mill, after admitting that the worst evils of Communism are, compared to the evils of our Commercialism, as dust in the balance, nevertheless condemned Communism, he immediately became a Communist, as Mill had clearly given his verdict against the evidence ' . "
- Fourier** : (1772-1837). French Socialist.
- Marx** : Karl (1818-1883). German economist and writer : founder of Socialism. Author of " Capital " .
140. **More's Utopia** : A book, describing an ideal commonwealth, first published in Latin, in 1516, by Sir Thomas More. It was translated into English in 1551. Utopia is an imaginary island, represented as enjoying approximate perfection in politics, laws etc.  
**Wallace** : Alfred Russel (1823-1913). English naturalist. His " Land Nationalization " was published in 1882.

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141. **Saffi** : One of three great patriots who worked for the liberation of Italy, the other two being Mazzini and Armellini.
142. **Scheu** : An Austrian friend of Morris.  
**Hyndman** : H. M. (1842-1921). The founder of the Social Democratic Federation, 1881, and of 'Justice'.
159. **Limehouse** : The most easterly part of Stepney borough in East End of London.
164. **Trafalgar Square** : One of the principal squares in London. It contains the Nelson monument.
165. **Mr. Gladstone's proposed Irish legislation** : The Home Rule Bill brought in by Gladstone on April 8, 1886, proposing to create a legislative body to sit at Dublin for dealing with affairs exclusively Irish. The Bill was rejected by Parliament.
167. **W. Bell Scott** : (1811-1890). Scottish poet, painter and writer.
168. **The Queen's Jubilee** : The Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign was celebrated on June 21, 1887.
171. **When he saw the multitudes etc.** : See the Old Testament : Genesis, Chapter 49, first part of verse 4.
172. **Men in buckram** : *i.e.* Non-existent men. (See Henry IV. Part II iv. 210-50). The allusion is to Falstaff's vaunting tale to Prince Henry.  
**The celebrated words** : "Sir William Harcourt (1827-1904), himself a whig and a lawyer of the old school startled the House of Commons by saying 'We are all socialists now.' The joke had an element of real meaning which made the saying proverbial." (G. M. Trevelyan, "British History in the Nineteenth Century.")
173. **Mr. Walter Crane** : (1845-1915). First President of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Painted many notable pictures.
178. **(The story) of the dwellers in Laxdale** : "The Lovers of Gudrun".
184. **New Traders' Unionism** : Trades Unions were then being organized. A 'trade union' is a voluntary organization of working people for the purpose of furthering their rights and privileges.
185. **Bellamy's book** : Edward Bellamy (1850-1898), American author, who wrote an utopia called "Looking Backward." Morris wrote a review of the book for 'The Commonwealth'.
188. **Dreamer of dreams** : "Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time" (Prologue to the "Earthly Paradise.")  
**Land East of the Sun** : One of the loveliest of the folk-lore group of tales in The Earthly Paradise. The poet gives us the long-drawn sufferings of the lover, journeying unhelped through an empty world in search of the land.  
"East of the Sun, West of the Moon  
A land that no man findeth soon."  
**The Star-Gazer** : The dream-motive was used by Morris in this early work, as it was used in the late romances. "The introduction of Gregory, the Star-gazer, skilfully draws us into the dream reality, and all through, as the tale breaks off for his reappearance, heightens the feeling of expectancy and mystery." May Morris : "William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist", Vol. I p. 412.

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- Odysseus and his comrades :** In Book X of Homer's epic, regarding the adventures of Odysseus (Ulysses), he and his crew are turned into swine in the island of Circe the sorceress.
- The book which the King's daughter shows to Hallblithe in his dream :** Hallblithe after strange adventures in the Isle of Ransom reaches the Acre of the Undying, and spends nearly a year there. In Chapter XIX of "The Story of the Glittering Plain" is described the dream of Hallblithe in which he saw "the lovely woman, the king's daughter, whom he had seen wasting her heart for the love of him."
189. **The Phalanstere of Fourier :** The co-operative socialistic system of Fourier (1772-1837), a Frenchman, who recommended the reorganization of society into small communities, living in common.
193. **Quaritch :** (1819-99). A famous dealer in rare books.
195. **Mr. Wilfrid Blunt :** (1840-1922). A poet who wrote sonnets and songs.
197. **The lost trilogies of Aeschylus etc.:** Aeschylus, the great Athenian tragic poet wrote many tragedies of which seven survive, one of which is the trilogy of Orestes.
198. **The Fight at Finsbury :** The name given to a fragment of 50 lines of an Old English epic poem, dealing with a portion of the tale of Finn and Hildeburh which is told by the minstrel in the Old English poem 'Beowulf'.
- **The Squire's Tale :** The poet promises the continuation of the tale but it is incomplete.
200. **The Marquis of Lorne :** A British statesman ; was Governor-general of Canada in 1878-83.
201. **Mr. E. B. Bax :** (1854-1926). A founder of English Socialism.
202. **Sidney Webb :** (1859-1947). An active progressive politician, and writer on economic questions. Raised to the peerage in 1920 as Lord Passfield.
203. **Blatchford :** (Robert) Born 1852. Editor of "Clarion".
204. **The great lock-out etc.:** Caused by the owners' demand for a 10 per cent. reduction in wages.
205. **In the Dream of John Ball :** The concluding scene in the church. Here Morris brings together in an allegorical setting the past and the present and the vision of the future.
- Mediaeval rebel and mystic :** John Ball.
- The modern Socialist :** *i.e.* the dreamer of "The Dream of John Ball".
- Over the white poppy-flower :** "In truth the dawn was widening now, and the colours coming into the pictures on wall and window.....The ruddy glow, which had but so little a while quite died out in the west, was now beginning to gather in the east—the new day was beginning. I looked at the poppy that I still carried in my hand." (From the last chapter of "A Dream of John Ball.")
- The vision of Er in Plato's Republic :** "He (Er) was slain in battle, and ten days afterwards, when the bodies of the dead were taken up already in a state of corruption, his body was found unaffected by decay, and carried away home to be

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- buried. And on the twelfth day, as he was lying on the funeral pile, he returned to life, and told them what he had seen in the other world." (Jowett: "The Dialogues of Plato". Vol. III P. 339, Oxford University Press.)
207. **Heimskringla** : A history of Norse kings from mythical times to 1177 by Snorri Sturlason, containing graphic pictures of the domestic and adventurous life of the Vikings.
209. **Broadbent** : (1835-1907). Was king's physician; wrote on medical subjects with distinction.
210. **Bergen** : A city in the west coast of Norway.  
**Spitzbergen** : A group of islands in the Arctic Ocean.
211. **William Byrd** : (1543-1623). Composer of the first English madrigals; he wrote much sacred music and largely for the virginal.
214. **Meredith** : George (1828-1909). English novelist.  
**Stevenson** : Robert Louis (1850-1894). English essayist and story-teller.  
**Ibsen** : Henrik (1828-1906). A Norwegian dramatist, whose works roused great interest in England.
215. **Pierre Loti** : His real name was Louis Marie Julien Viaud : (1850-1923). French author.  
**Maurice Maeterlinck** : Belgian poet and critical writer.
217. **Cotswolds** : Hilly tract in Gloucestershire.
219. **Principes mortales, rem publicom etc.** : When the remains of Germanicus were laid in the tomb of Augustus, some people at Rome complained that the funeral arrangements lacked the pomp and circumstance befitting a great man. These murmurings were reported to the emperor, Tiberius, who thereupon issued an edict, in the course of which he reminded them "that princes were mortal, the Empire was eternal; let them therefore return to their customary occupations." (Tacitus, Annals, III, 6).
220. **Odin** : The chief god of Norse Mythology.









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